George Eliot and Thomas Hardy a Contrast

Lina Wright Berle

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GEORGE ELIOT
AND
THOMAS HARDY

A CONTRAST

BY
LINA WRIGHT BERLE

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To My Parents

The First Fruits of Their Love and Toil

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Attractive editions of the principal works of George Eliot are published in Everyman's Library by E. P. Dutton & Company, and in The World's Classics by The Oxford University Press, New York.

GEORGE ELIOT AND THOMAS HARDY

I

RATIONAL IDEALISM

ARDENT souls, ready to construct their coming lives, are apt to commit themselves to the fulfilment of their own visions," wrote George Eliot in *Middlemarch*. This anxiety to realize an ideal is one of the greatest motive forces in the world; wisely directed, it makes possible great reforms and lasting achievements, but without a rational foundation it degenerates into an aimless unrest which is doomed to futility. Under the formative influence of the nineteenth century this idealism has abolished slavery and reformed prisons; it has developed hospitals and improved sanitation; it has fostered the social

sciences, and ministered to the needs of its less favored contemporaries on a scale never before possible in the world's history. A great humanitarian impulse, coincident with great material development, has opened the way for tremendous, and almost unbelievable, advances.

But with these unquestioned improvements there have come the corresponding drawbacks of various sorts. Perhaps the plainest evidence of these lies in the change which has affected the realm of speculative thought, and literature in so far as it reflects that thought. Formerly the attention of the people was fixed on a social group which stood above them. In the days when learning was the possession of the few, the learned class took this position of preëminence. In one way and another the emphasis has shifted. We no longer look at a class which we expect to contribute to our development, but at a group to whose ascent we hope to give material assistance. Our attitude is none the less aristocratic for all this; we can-

not make parade of our increasing democracy of spirit; what has happened is merely that we believe ourselves the aristocrats, instead of looking to others for this distinction. In our pride of emergence, we assume a tone of patronage which is in itself a sign of imperfect education.

In literature the development is peculiarly striking. From the classical insistence upon themes of high and lofty import, we have gone to the opposite extreme. A modern poet, John Masefield, in the prelude to a volume of *Salt-Water Ballads,* defines the province in which his main interest lies with precision, clearness, and poetry withal:

Not of the princes and prelates with peri-
wigged charioteers,
Riding triumphantly laurelled, to lap the fat
of the years,
Rather the scorned, the rejected, the men
hemmed in by the spears. . . .
Of the maimed, of the halt, and the blind in
the rain and the cold,
Of these shall my songs be fashioned, my tales
be told.

Masefield is not alone in his preference for this stratum of society. In the mistaken effort to democratize literature and thought, we have fastened our attention upon our social and intellectual inferiors. This is legitimate enough; but before embarking upon such a course the danger should be clearly faced—that of assimilating those very traits which we wish to eradicate. This is the more dangerous in those whose privilege it is to lead their generation.

A disquieting feature of the new humanitarianism is the tendency to devote the best of its artistic effort to the interpretation of the injurious or degenerating elements in our civilization. Oscar Wilde, with *The Picture of Dorian Grey* and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol,* occurs at once as a pertinent example of a few years ago; Mr. Percival Pollard, in his *Masks and Minstrels of New Germany,* gives examples and criticism of another phase of the same outgrowth of our civilization. These interpretations are not written in any corrective or satiric spirit, under which guise

the dramatists of the Restoration used to justify their brutal representations; it is part of what purports to be an impartial presentment of life as it actually is. With such an impartial picture we have no proper quarrel; but it is seldom that this can be conducted in a strictly scientific spirit. It is argued that the portrait must be sympathetic to be accurate. From sympathy the next step is to interpretation of hidden motives, and finally to justification of them. In literature we have *Tess of the D'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman, Faithfully Presented.* In criminology it takes the form of the view of the offender as the victim of disease; in education it is identified with the conception of the child as the product of an unalterable heredity, or environment, or both. Whatever the field, the tendency is invariably the same. We must place the responsibility for existing facts of personality on conditions arising from this disjointed frame of things, not by any conspiracy upon the human creature himself.

It is a curious paradox that this negation of

individual dignity should run parallel with a complete practical individualism. Never were men less bound by convention than now. The reason may be that in feeling themselves so thoroughly fettered by laws into which they have only a partial insight,—if, indeed, that is permitted them,—they believe themselves thereby emancipated from all share in either the triumphs or the failures of a universe run on principles of scientific management by an impersonal Bureau of Vital Statistics, and accordingly obliged to consider nothing beyond their own desires.

Of this form of exaggerated humanitarianism Thomas Hardy is in a certain sense the typical exponent. He preaches at once an individualism unbounded in its scope, because unlimited by other than hedonistic considerations, and a social philosophy whose key-stone is the broadest charity for even the most loathsome excesses. From being in a measure a pioneer in this field of literature, for his work began while "Victorianism" was still rampant, he has become a commonplace among modern

propagandists. This way madness lies. We may fairly ask with Matthew Arnold:

> Is there no life save this alone?
> Madman or slave, must man be one?

The direct question is whether it is possible to look at those things which lie on a lower level justly, sympathetically, and frankly, without being tainted by them, as a result of our over-zealous humanitarianism.

Fortunately, there is a rational idealism. There have always been some who would not bow the knee to Baal, however great the provocation; who refused to allow euphemism to obscure actuality, or to dignify mediocrity in the name of democracy. Perhaps the sanest representative of this tradition in literature is George Eliot, herself a humanitarian of the humanitarians, a woman who was willing to take the radical position in a crisis rather than abandon a principle to convention.

Humanitarian zeal in George Eliot is qualified by a strong recognition of the need for standards and criteria whereby to make ef-

fective the attempted reforms. As a result, though her sympathies are catholic, she never allows them to blunt her perception of the wider values involved. There is no question of obscuring sin under the name of misfortune, or of disguising wrongdoing under the sanction of necessity or expediency. This makes for the delineation of a society far more easy to live in than that in which each infringement of the moral law or social convention must instantly bear its burden of explanation, interpretation, and justification. The reader is relieved from the horrible fear that his natural disapprobations may have led him into the unpardonable sin of purely conventional censure.

In addition, there is this to be remembered in contrasting the humanitarianism of George Eliot with that of later writers. Her point of view is one which never loses sight of the fact that humanity, liable to err as it is, will be divided in its error only by the nature of its opportunity. Given equal means, its sins and resistances will be much the same. Clear as she

is in her perception of the degrees of moral stature, she is never so bigoted as to intimate a superiority impossible to the people of whom she writes, as the moderns not infrequently do. Her pictures of degeneration, of weakness and wrong, of moral obliquity, are all so delicately tuned to the actual conditions of life that we, in contemplating them, are forced to admit, in whatever phraseology best suits ourselves, "There, but for the grace of God, goes John Bunyan."

On the whole, such a position as this is an excellent one for us to find ourselves in. It is altogether too easy for us to fall into the position which Charles Lamb voluntarily preferred in the drama, and to say of the literature of our day, and its moral or non-moral values:

> I confess for myself that (with no great delinquencies to answer for) I am glad for a season to take an airing beyond the diocese of strict conscience, not to live always within the precincts of the law-courts,—but now and then, for a dream-while or so, to imagine a world with no meddling restrictions—to get into re-

cesses whither the hunter cannot follow me . . . I come back to my cage and my restraint the fresher and more healthy for it.

The slight difference between our point of view and this is that whereas Lamb loves to escape from the cage of actuality, we take pleasure in the plunge into what seems to us the prison of life as it really is. Whereas Lamb loved to create for himself an illusory world in which moral judgments were unnecessary, we love to lower ourselves into a world where also moral judgments are, for one reason or another, superfluous,—in which we revel in the degradation of our lives.

This we do in the name of reality. We have waked to the consciousness that the old world of romance and chivalry, of Arden and Illyria and Verona, of Robin Hood and Henry of Navarre, Joan of Arc and Beatrice Cenci, was only a child's world, "such stuff as dreams are made of." What we have achieved in its place is not realism, but a bitter travesty of it, a grotesque and absurd fidelity to the mechani-

cal facts of life, without the corresponding recognition of the spiritual values which are equally a part of it. There are still those who perceive that life is not the sordid thing which passes as such in these studies. To readers fully conscious of this, George Eliot appears as at once realist and artist,—one who presents not only the truth, but the illusion of truth as well. There is a sober satisfaction in her novels such as the modernists rarely give, unless as a conscious reversion to an older type. For the older novelist was not hampered by a public which demanded journalistic terseness of him; if he wished to introduce an incident of pure characterization, he felt free to do so, without the fear that by so doing he would interrupt the closeness of contact between author and reader. His selection of material followed artistic lines, rather than the arbitrary regulations of space and copy.

Even on his own ground, that of presenting the much sought-after "cross-section of life," the modern critic must admit that George Eliot has fairly met him. Indeed, the accuracy

and minuteness of her achievements are surprising. Sometimes, it must be admitted, this happens to the detriment of the artistic effect. Such a novel as *Middlemarch,* for example, owes its chief value to this. A small provincial town, wherein dwell representatives of all classes, independently existing, and brought into contact with each other only by the merest accident of daily life, offers scope for a social study such as we are fond of contemplating. A present-day novelist would doubtless limit his field still more decisively, as indeed has been done by a German of the new school, to the small group living in a single tenement.

The society which George Eliot depicts is wide enough in its range to include representatives of nearly all classes, particularly those habitually included in the so-called reading public. The majority of her readers belong largely to the class which she best understands, —educated, intelligent, and safely removed from any extreme. In her characterization she has the further advantage of the setting in which her action normally lies. If we except

Romola, in which she attempts to reproduce a past civilization, there is no novel which does not take place under the most usual conditions of English life.

On such a basis we may develop a rational idealism,—one which, while acknowledging facts, recognizes also the relation of the spiritual elements in life to the grosser material forces. Of course we must remember the point which Emerson drove home with such directness: "I can reason down or deny everything except this perpetual Belly; feed he must and will, and I cannot make him respectable." In all idealistic theory and practice we must take into account this fundamental physical necessity. Yet there is something beyond, which produces as valuable factors in any civilization as the material ones. "There are so many tender and holy emotions flying about in our inward world," wrote Jean Paul, "which, like angels, can never assume the body of an outward act; so many rich and lovely flowers spring up which bear no seed, that it is a happiness poetry was invented, which receives into

its limbus all these incorporeal spirits, and the perfume of all these flowers." To conserve these elements, there is necessary something more far-reaching in our civilization and its literature than the understanding of commonplaces and brutalities.

For it remains true that literature is the most powerful instrument for preserving these flowers of the spirit. Philosophy is too remote from the bulk of our life to have the influence of which it is capable. Music has not the definiteness which is needful to the fullest expression. The written word, for all its inadequacy, is still the best medium through which to communicate both the sense and the sentiment of our ideals.

"*Ardent souls, ready to construct their coming lives, are apt to commit themselves to the fulfilment of their own visions.*" And therefore it is essential that their visions should be perpetuated and strengthened by a literature in which a sane realism neither ignores nor magnifies the sordid elements in even the most perfectly regulated civilization. It is a curious

fact that there are always the two strands in literature,—always distinct, frequently interwoven and overlapping, yet constantly recognizable,—the one concerned with the representation of the higher, the other with the lower phases of life. In the drama the separation has been peculiarly marked, until the modern introduction of the play which cannot be classified either as comedy or tragedy, or under any one of the subdivisions by which we attempt the task of defining the various aspects of human history. The drama of the Restoration, for example, with its strained and impossibly idealistic tragedy closely paralleled by its witty and grossly sensual realistic comedy, is a fair illustration of the combination of the two threads at a given time. In the same way the two tendencies are shown in the novels of a slightly later period. The mawkish sentiment of Richardson is accompanied by the full-blooded, unreflecting realism of Fielding. In the nineteenth century the romantic sympathy and revolutionary enthusiasm of Shelley and Wordsworth degenerate into a discontented

protest against life as it is, or a passive acquiescence in its imperfections. Matthew Arnold, with all his excellences, is, so far as his poetry is concerned, an example of the former, and Oscar Wilde the apotheosis of the latter attitude.

With the actual fulfilment of these visions literature can have but little to do. Sometimes, of course, a book deals with a particular subject at a time of such widely diffused feeling regarding it, that it brings about the immediate completion of an impending reform, and is therefore credited with being the immediate cause of the advance. This was true of *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* of *Bleak House,* and of *Oliver Twist.* Special circumstances in regard to the time which produced them have often given to books a reputation for humanitarian achievement to which no intrinsic merit entitles them. As a rule the most that literature can do is to stimulate effort along special lines of its own choosing.

George Eliot stands in a central position between the two streams. Not only is she in

sympathy with those who are anxious to see all and judge leniently yet justly, but also she recognizes the fallacy of allowing the critical faculties to lapse in the interest of interpretation. She shows, as do few of the moderns, a careful sense of the due proportions to be observed in all social philosophy. How this is accomplished will be shown in succeeding chapters. For the present the important thing for us to note is the achievement.

The question may fairly be raised: What has the generation which has succeeded George Eliot's done to carry on the ideal? The answer is not easy. We stand in the middle of a confused tangle of contradictory developments. Our cosmopolitan and international ideals have of late suffered a rude shock, which must inevitably change their course and modify their accents. Our social philosophy has also undergone change. A little of this is the necessary reaction which always follows the partial achievement of an aim, or the half-completion of a definitely expressed purpose. Always "a man's reach should exceed his grasp,"

and it is inevitable that ideals should expand with the increase in accomplishment, superseding those which went before in some measure. We can point to some successes, and many failures; to ideals which proved impossible of immediate fulfilment, and to visions which lacked the essentials for perpetuity. What we can say with definiteness is that, to the extent in which she expressed the idealism of her time, George Eliot did so in the direction which the subsequent generation has found most sound.

The vision of a world set free can only be realized by the intelligent co-operation and mental rapprochement of thousands of individuals, each working in a limited area, and necessarily with limited opportunities. To help them understand the problems of their lives in their larger relations is more important than that they should have a clear knowledge of abnormal psychology. The simple, straightforward interpretation of their own lives holds far wider promise than the analysis of degeneracy and disease. Of the latter our law-courts and hospitals give an all too convincing picture.

The generation which is ready to construct its coming life is not that to which George Eliot spoke. Instead, it is a generation which has included her in its list of discarded thinkers. Its mind is fed with violences, both of actual fact and of imaginative conception. The naturalists of the extreme Russian and French schools, to which Hardy's work has affiliations, could conceive no more overwhelming world-catastrophe than that which has made itself the commonplace of our times. The lawlessness of the world of fact has out-run the lawlessness of the world of fiction. It is therefore small matter for wonder that such an orderly and essentially sane view of life as George Eliot's should have been superseded in popular favor. Not that it has been in any sense outgrown. Her appeal to tradition, her appreciation of the value of the conventional standards of marriage, let us say, is no less pertinent today than it was in 1870. In his book, *Problems of Conduct,* Dr. Durant Drake cites *Adam Bede* as a book which every adolescent boy or girl should be required to read, for

the soundness of its point of view. Twentieth century eugenic education can go no further than this.

It may be that this newer generation is not so far removed from the old except in its phraseology. That undoubtedly has changed. To the old ideals we have given a wider significance, in some cases, and strange new names; we have invented a disturbingly scientific terminology to replace the vaguer, simpler nomenclature of our forbears. Faith, Hope, and Love are still the cardinal virtues, but as frequently as not we disguise them under the pretentious titles of Economic Adjustment, Social Unrest, and Race Culture, or similar phrases. But in actual practice the problems are always the same—to walk uprightly and humbly, to love mercy and justice, are the unchanging ideals among men.

"*Ardent souls, ready to construct their coming lives, are apt to commit themselves to the fulfilment of their own visions.*" What George Eliot's own vision was her work has shown us. In nothing was it clearer or more close to ful-

filment than where it touched upon the delicate adjustment of women to society. What the factors were which entered into the perception thus recorded, this is not the place to state. Undoubtedly, however, personal experience figured largely to produce an exceptional understanding of the currents and cross currents which make for a sound social morality. Above all, her work is founded on a plain consciousness of the fundamental realities of society. There is nothing exotic or unnatural about her attitude. Realism is the basis of her artistic skill. In this realistic attitude is shown the literary manifestation of the much-vaunted scientific spirit of the past century. Where both are rightly conceived neither science nor idealism need fear each other, for their end is the same. Whereas the scientist looks at the instrument by which the change is to be brought about, the idealist regards the personality which is to achieve it. The union of these two points of view produces great realistic art.

How these two elements may be divorced, and what results therefrom forms a separate

study. In Hardy there is an example of what passes as the scientific attitude, independent of moral or social restraints, operating in the field of literature. What can be achieved by this method, and what are its shortcomings, it is the purpose of subsequent discussion to show. By contrast with George Eliot, the differences between the new and the old humanitarianism become apparent, and the need for a rational idealism gains in emphasis.

II

HARDY AND THE SCIENTIFIC SPIRIT

THE gulf between George Eliot and Thomas Hardy, though a short one in point of time, represents an immeasurable change in point of view. Those who admire Hardy are accustomed to credit him with almost unbounded authority in the interpretation of the life he pictures, with a profound knowledge of the subtleties of human character, and with a comprehensive philosophy to explain his observations. Granting these, it is not far to the conclusion that here is a great realist. As a matter of fact, the qualifications necessary in this connection are many and various. Of realism, in the sense in which that term applies to George Eliot, there is but little. In her case there is a humanism which is

practically not far removed from the scientific spirit, characteristic both of her century and the present, which is utterly lacking in Hardy. Hardy is the romantic decadent, and this shows in his entire attitude toward life and literature.

The contrasts are interesting and suggestive. The essence of the scientific spirit is candid, impartial vision, which is incapable of ignoring data which may interfere with theory; it is a straightforward recognition of all known aspects of a given problem, and an honest attempt to evolve from the inchoate body of information a law or principle to consort with the whole. As in the natural sciences, so in literature. The realist must proceed in the same spirit. And this is not of necessity inconsistent with strong moral or artistic purpose, though the desire to heighten an effect or strengthen a case by misrepresentation or even distortion of facts must be reckoned as one of the temptations of the undertaking.

It is in this spirit that George Eliot writes. She makes no effort to narrow her field except

as the outlook of her characters narrows it for her. On the other hand, she does not unduly widen it beyond their horizon. She does not confine herself to the limitations of a single rank or class, or to certain forms of experience within the group. All phases of life are portrayed. Romola ministers to her blind father, catalogues his books, consults her guardian about trivial household affairs, and at the same time follows the combined guidance of her reason and her affection in the conduct of her life with Tito. It is always necessary for her to feed her poor and carry out her daily tasks, whatever her mental anguish. Thus the analysis of the underlying motives and passions gains force and intensity from its setting. Adam Bede carries his idealism into his workshop as into his home:

I can't abide to see men throw away their tools i' that way, the minute the clock strikes, as if they took no pleasure in their work, and was afraid of doing a stroke too much. . . . I hate to see a man's arms drop down as if he was shot, before the clock's fairly struck, just

as if he'd never a bit o' pride and delight in 's work. The very grindstone 'ull go on turning a bit after you loose it.

Such a man is never wholly detached in his personal griefs and misgivings from the daily tasks which make up the common round of life. He is never dissociated from his fellow mortals except in the skill of his apologist. The stream of life that carries him along is not unusual in any respect. It is made up of humdrum occurrences, lights and shadows, dark places and clear, all deftly manipulated to show without exaggeration what lies within.

This is the scientific spirit in the inclusion of material. The next business is the classification, analysis, and assaying of the material which is thus comprehended. This is nothing less than the critical attitude, which tests all things impartially, approves whatsoever is lovely and of good report, while rejecting the unworthy portions of that which comes within its view. George Eliot is never afraid to face facts. The tragic end of all Lydgate's ambitions, the pitiful inadequacy of the opportunity

vouchsafed to Dorothea Brooke, and the broken music of Romola's life, all receive due attention. There is never any lack of sympathy, or euphemism; but the euphemism never conceals or befogs the issue. There is a tact in the handling of powerful themes and crude passions which softens their harshnesses without obscuring the issues involved. Calling a spade a spade, while traditionally excellent, is not always the most effective way of opposing an undesirable condition. One is reminded of Stevenson's delightful sentence:

> Thus, when a young lady has angelic features, eats nothing to speak of, plays all day on the piano, and sings ravishingly in church, it requires a rough infidelity, falsely called cynicism, to believe that she may be a little devil after all. Yet so it is; she may be a tale-bearer, a liar, and a thief; she may have a taste for brandy and no heart. My compliments to George Eliot for her Rosamond Vincy; the ugly work of satire she has transmuted to the ends of art by the companion figure of Lydgate; and the satire was much wanted for the education of young men.

The critical attitude is none the less powerful for being accompanied by reticence and delicacy of feeling.

Finally, the purpose for which the investigation is undertaken differs in the humanistic realist from that which moves a naturalist like Hardy. George Eliot has a moral purpose,—sometimes, it must be confessed, too intrusive,—which spurs her to show the follies, the weaknesses, and the sins of those whom she portrays. These are always shown as excrescences which disfigure the constructive ideal which fills her mind. Even her notable failures must be reckoned as attempts to embody this ideal; but it is hardly to be wondered at that she should fail in the representation of human characters wholly without flaw or blemish. There is only one convincing record of such a personality in literature, and this is marred by the stigmata of Calvary.

Of scientific spirit in this sense there is none in Hardy. He makes no attempt to reproduce the life of the Wessex towns in anything like

its completeness and probable soundness. *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *Far from the Madding Crowd* are the only novels in which the sexual passion plays no more than a normal part in the development of character. In *Jude the Obscure* the author is frankly interested only in studying the effect upon a particular organism of the two sensual passions, love and the thirst for strong drink. His studies are of degenerate or degenerating character, or of character fluctuating under every breath of inclination or circumstance. Here are folk with neither morals nor ideals, who are utterly without principle upon which to base their action. Such a drifting character is Tess; Dr. Fitzpiers of *The Woodlanders* is another, as is Mrs. Charmond, the lady of his affections. Eustacia Vye and Wildeve are another pair who show the same qualities; and because the descriptions of the latter are so characteristic both of Hardy's men in general, and of this peculiarity in his point of view, they should be quoted here:

He was quite a young man, and of the two properties, form and motion, the latter first attracted the eye to him. The grace of his movement was singular; it was the pantomimic expression of a lady-killing career. Next came into notice the more material qualities, among which was a profuse crop of hair impending over the top of his face, lending to his forehead the high-cornered outline of an early Gothic shield, and a neck which was smooth and round as a cylinder. The lower half of his figure was of a light build. Altogether he was one in whom no man would have seen anything to admire, and no woman would have seen anything to dislike. . . .

To be yearning for the difficult, to be weary of the offered; to care for the remote, to dislike the near; it was Wildeve's nature always. This is the true mark of the man of sentiment. Though Wildeve's fevered feeling had not been elaborated to real poetical compass, it was of the standard sort. He might have been called the Rousseau of Egdon.

In none of these cases is the wrongdoing the result of positive wickedness. Fitzpiers is in nowise to blame for his sudden attachment to the mistress of Hintock Manor—he had never seen her until after his marriage to

Grace Melbury. Tess was fated not to meet the perfect complement to her own nature until after the fatal connection with Alec D'Urberville, and deserved no blame for her weakness; and so with Eustacia's lover. There is neither constancy nor spiritual integrity among these folk, with but rare exceptions, and these are generally of slight interest for the author.

Closely allied with his concern for special phases of experience only, comes the cognate attempt to reproduce the psychology of abnormal sex development. There is scarcely a novel or a tale which does not contain the figure of an over-sexed man or woman, or of both, whose unconscious and unrestrained indulgences form the mainstay of the story, if they are not actually the whole material of the plot. This is true in *The Return of the Native,* in *Jude the Obscure,* and in *A Pair of Blue Eyes,* to mention cases almost at random. Characters who start with normal sympathies and aims, such as Thomasin Yeobright, are distorted by contact with these, and woven into

a phantasmagoric vision of sin and corruption, hopeless of cure, and often unconsidered in its true figure of disease. Two characteristic descriptions of women will serve to bring home the peculiarities of the type, both for itself and in its relations to the men of Hardy's imagination. The first, and simplest, illustration is taken from *The Mayor of Casterbridge:*

Lucetta, as a young girl, would hardly have looked at a tradesman. But her bereavements and impoverishments, capped by her indiscretions in relation to Henchard, had made her uncritical as to station. In her poverty she had met with repulse from the society to which she belonged, and she had no zest for renewing her attempt upon it now. Her erratic heart longed for some ark into which it could fly and be at rest. Rough or smooth, she did not care, so long as it was warm.

More subtle in its implications is the picture of Mrs. Charmond, as she appeared to Grace Melbury on the occasion of the girl's first visit to her:

"Do," she said, leaning back in her chair and placing her hand above her forehead, while her

almond eyes—those long eyes so common to early Italian art—became longer and her voice more languishing. She showed that oblique-mannered softness which is perhaps most frequent in women of darker complexion and more lymphatic temperament than Mrs. Charmond was; who lingeringly smile their meanings to men rather than speak them, who inveigle rather than prompt, and take advantage of currents rather than steer.

There is everything in the customary life of the farms and hamlets to foster such excesses. Hardy is not content with placing abnormal people into normal circumstances of life, as nature generally is; he must add to the squalor and sordidness conditions which shall emphatically preclude the possibility of escape from environment or heredity—on the whole, a quite unnecessary provision, since without this additional handicap the situation was sufficiently adverse.

"Science is the systematic classification of experience," said George Henry Lewes. There is nothing in this view of human life to justify one in considering Hardy's point of view sci-

entific. There remains the question of whether he is scientific in his handling of his theme. It is generally admitted that the scientific attitude is in the last degree impersonal, and in this faculty of impersonal representation Hardy perhaps exceeds George Eliot, for her sympathy with all her characters makes her attitude by no means that of the detached omniscience which is characteristic in the other case. The deficiency, if such it is, lies in a different direction. Science is always a matter of fixed proportion, fluctuating, it may be, but exact and measured in the flux. Incidents in Hardy have no proportion in this mathematical sense. There is something roughly corresponding to the old theory of humors in his treatment of character, for his habit is to trace simply the effect of a single passion upon a person's life. Presumably there were many instances where the normal duties and concerns of Sue Bridehead's life overpowered her supersensitiveness in matters relating to the lusts of the flesh. But of these we have no trace. There is no evidence that there devel-

oped in her any of the passion of maternity which may fairly be called one of the fundamentals of womanhood, be it never so perverted. The murder of her children affects her only in its bearing on her own tangled theory and practice of sex-relations. She is typical of many other such characters, male and female alike.

Such lack of proportion is unjustifiable on artistic grounds. It dispels the illusion of reality either as to fact or sentiment, leaving in its place only the sense of pathological investigation. This seems at first sight firm, if unsavory, scientific ground. So it would be, if it could be relied upon. But as a matter of fact, even this pillar of strength is withdrawn; for there is no psychological justification for much that forms the stuff of these studies. There are many errors in the psychology of "Tess," unrecognized for reasons which are presently to be noted. A reservation might be made along one line, however. In the portraiture of old men, in whom the passion of love has become transmuted into the sentiment of pater-

nity, and of old women, Hardy reaches perhaps the truest analysis of character—less entrancing, to be sure, than his pictures of youthful exuberance and vitality, but so much the more natural and intelligible.

As to morality, he is indifferent. Right or wrong makes little difference in his presentation; his interest is solely in the picturesque aspects of his material. Science, undoubtedly, knows no ethical values; and it is an open question whether art should recognize any such distinctions with greater propriety. Dr. Johnson would answer unhesitatingly that it must, and would find ample room for censure in what would certainly impress him as positive immorality, or at best a perverse inversion of moral values. His view is, of course, that of an extremist. But it is not necessary to go to the opposite pole as has been the custom in the reaction from the older formalism, and to exclude all ethical values from the province of art entirely. The only demand which we may rigidly enforce upon the artist is that of truth to fact and sentiment, so that we may be sure of an

honest attempt to achieve the ideal formulated by Joubert,—"The ordinary true, or purely real, cannot be the object of the arts. Illusion on a ground of truth—that is the secret of the fine arts."

The ideal of life which Hardy develops is one which allows only degeneration to the individual. Even the forces which seem to lead to the highest and most hopeful development meet invariable checks and cross-currents which bring them to nothing. Hardy's characters never pass from a lower to a higher spirituality, as George Eliot's frequently do; they are bound on the wheel of life which inexorably breaks them in its revolutions. Self-control is an impossibility, and indeed unnecessary, for where fate is all-powerful, control or intemperance are alike unable to avert the catastrophe or determine happiness. Thus, there is nothing to be gained by striving, no value in effort, no hope of salvation either by faith or by works. This is contrary to the spirit of scientific research, which looks constantly

forward in the hope of solving difficulties in the light of the knowledge already gained.

Yet, in spite of these limitations, Hardy's power is undeniable, and it is of extreme interest to notice on what basis it rests. In part it is due to the use of legitimate artistic means, and so far as this is the case it is altogether praiseworthy. There is no question that he has the gift of lyric expression to a high degree. Such scenes as those of the courtship of Tess and Angel Clare in the dairy at Talbothays are full of passionate intensity and lyric enthusiasm which lift them into the range of high literature. This is the effect of remarkable stylistic gifts, and the result of genuine artistic feeling.

But after this legitimate power is exhausted, Hardy makes use of another which is more questionable. He does not hesitate to describe with lavish detail the circumstances which lead up to acts of violence or brutality. This is in the name of psychological analysis, perhaps. Very well. These crimes and misdeeds are almost invariably those resulting from some

perversion of the sex-instinct, which, as a general rule, is consciously stimulated by one or another of the parties concerned. In this connection it is interesting to notice the recurrence of a special vocabulary to increase the suggestiveness at which he aims. The word *"stultify"* occurs with frequency. *"Fervid"* and *"perfervid"* and similar words are of common occurrence. So also the adjective used to describe Tess' physical perfections in the following sentence: "This morning the eye returns involuntarily to the girl in the pink cotton jacket, she being the most *flexuous* and finely drawn figure of them all." By stylistic tricks like these, whether consciously or unconsciously, he predisposes to a somewhat unhealthy mental position. For aptly chosen words may have the same stimulating effect as music. There is no astringent principle in handling these themes, like that which in the older literature is supplied by the belief in conscience and the moral law, to counteract the freedom of manners and conduct which is practised. There is no power of free-will.

Having thus established his atmosphere by the use of natural artistry and artificial suggestion, Hardy makes use of it to further develop an illegitimate end. *Jude the Obscure* is a revolt against the usual conditions of marriage. This is the most elaborate case, but it is by no means exceptional. The theme recurs with unfailing regularity. Revolt against the traditional standards of sexual morality is the basis of every novel in some fashion, and this leads insensibly to the development of cognate anarchies. The individualistic fallacy cries out from every page.

The foregoing is a bald statement of the moral positions involved. No one will question the legitimacy of an artist's use of all his skill in developing his thesis; but it is a fair question whether he has a right to gain his effects by pandering to the least worthy instincts and prejudices of his readers. Sometimes, of course, he may justify the means by the end to be attained. In the cases where there is a fully developed philosophy of life, the justification may fairly rest on this. We may then ask with

propriety how this counteracts or confirms the recognizably illegitimate means by which it is expressed.

Hardy's philosophy is, as might be inferred, one which glorifies the liberty of the individual in all matters of conduct and behavior. There never occurs to any of his folk the question of their relation to society at large or the possibility of duties toward any save their own individualities. It becomes, therefore, a matter of pity rather than censure when, in following the dictates of individual conscience, one or another hapless wight incurs the traditional reproach and contumely with which society, as at present constituted, visits offenders. The ironies which Hardy perceives in life are really nothing less than the discrepancies between action induced by the individual perception of moral relations and those traditionally accepted by social usage. This individual liberty is particularly to be exercised in those personal relations between men and women which seem, on the surface, to be matters of individual concern only, but which are more and more being

recognized as charged with a significance of which society at large must take cognizance.

Of the right or wrong of such a philosophy this is not the place to speak. The outstanding fact is that here is a view of life antagonistic to any which has stood the test of successful practice, enforced by a series of pictures which have no relation to actual conditions, and which serve only to emphasize the individual belief of their author. No remedy is possible, for no real condition has been shown. No social changes are possible, for no definitely recognizable evils have been exposed. Hardy's philosophy is formed to explain and justify circumstances invented and elaborated in romantic indifference to the usual business of life. It is utterly foreign to the scientific ideals of the majority of the generation which produced it.

The scientific spirit is that in which George Eliot conducts her representation of provincial life. Not only does she seek fidelity to the facts of life, but also fidelity to humankind itself. This has been the path of sane realism. Hardy is but following the fashion, set by Con-

tinental novelists, of searching for the heart of man at one of the extremes of development, and choosing for that purpose those who are of the lower ranks of spiritual creation. George Eliot shows the limitations imposed on her by the medium through which she works. In fiction, even of the realistic sort; we still insist upon a hero, a heroine, and a villain, after the old melodramatic style, but thinly disguised. For the villain, indeed, we have developed new attributes and powers. Society, alcoholism, heredity, are some of the newer names for an old acquaintance. In the novels of George Eliot there is rarely a hero, never a villain, and only occasionally a heroine. Certain characters there are whose fortunes are made pivotal, persons around whom the lives of a group center; but no one of these is of greater intrinsic importance than another. In a measure this is traceable to the leisurely method of an older generation, which allowed space for detail such as a modern novelist, willing or not, must forego. But it is also the result of an impartial

and open-minded attitude toward life which recognizes no limitations of interest.

In this day of excessive enthusiasm for the uplift of women, the difference between the scientific attitude, which is essentially the critical attitude, and the emotional one, may best be discerned and analyzed in relation to the woman question so-called. The problem of the normal woman as well as that of the abnormal woman may serve as a touchstone by which to test and determine values. It is only by some such study that we can understand the principles involved in such a radical difference of outlook as presented by George Eliot and Hardy.

III

WEAK SISTERS

PERHAPS no point of contrast among many between Thomas Hardy and George Eliot is more striking than their treatment of womanhood. It is not merely the difference in perspective between a man's view and a woman's; neither is it a question of several years' difference in point of time; it is a fundamental contrast in point of view, to explain which leads into a long study of conditions and conventions. To say that Hardy's attitude is French is simply to evade the issue. If that were the distinction, however, the question would still be legitimate: What is it that separates the French from other attitudes toward women? It is in reality a view of the relations between normal and abnormal women, often complicated to mean the relation-

ships between good and bad women, and opens in all its diversity the comparison between women whose lives are in accord with the conventional restrictions of society and those who, by their own or another's act, are placed outside the pale of moral approbation.

This distinction between the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon view of women is based on varying conceptions of the relation of woman to society at large. If she be regarded wholly as a creature whose value lies solely in her sex,—as the emphasis is in Latin society,—it follows that in literature colored by such a view she will be treated as subject, chiefly, if not entirely, to those emotional states and crises which relate only to the development and necessities of sexual life. This is Hardy's attitude in the main. A characteristic sentence may be quoted in evidence thereof. It is part of the description of Tess as she appeared before the seduction by Alec D'Urberville: "Tess Durbeyfield at this time of her life was a mere vessel of emotion, untinctured by experience." Hardy's stories are of the mating, mismating,

and unmating of men and women, ignoring the existence of any other motives as determining factors in human intercourse. Even in a book like *Jude the Obscure,* where in Sue Bridehead he tries to picture a woman relatively free from the dominion of sex, he succeeds only in creating an impression of sexual irresponsibility. The whole story of *The Return of the Native* is the story of the maladjustment in these relations of an oversexed woman.

On such a basis it is necessarily impossible to rear a structure of sound morality—or, indeed, of morality in any sense; for morality rests fundamentally upon the power of the individual to control his physical impulses. If to women are denied these essential means to grace, it leaves them, very properly, in somewhat the relation to an androcentric world which Tennyson so bitterly decried:

He will hold you, when his passion shall have
spent its novel force,
Something better than his dog, a little dearer
than his horse.

Such is essentially the Latin attitude toward womankind.

At the other extreme is the conception which we take pride, somewhat unduly, in calling Anglo-Saxon. It is not always, perhaps, a genuine thing with us, but rather one which we hold up to the public gaze as an evidence of superiority, but to which our practice does not necessarily conform. It is an ideal of womanhood which allows participation of both sexes equally in the affairs of life, and grants to woman as to man the opportunity of shaping destinies and fortunes more far-reaching than her own. It is for this ideal that the so-called feminists of the present day are striving, often with blundering and through many mistakes, but with the firm intention of emphasising and establishing past question the woman's right to equal recognition and power with the man. The feminist attitude is concerned with the woman in industry, in public life, in ever increasing spheres of public usefulness and economic importance.

The woman who is capable of this develop-

ment and of this consideration is not represented in Hardy. Instead, it is her weaker sister who holds the centre of interest—the woman who lives by reason of her sex, and for no other purpose. Such a woman, at her best, is capable of a high and sensitive emotional life, even, it may be, the refinement of grace and charm, but she holds no power over the minds of those around her. Sue Bridehead is perhaps the most elaborate study of this type which Hardy has made. From this point, through all the varying degrees of fineness, down to the utter vulgarity of Arabella Donn, he has traced the influence of such women. With all the changes of accent which are induced by differing situations he nevertheless preserves the same sentiment which makes the lure of such a portrait as this of Tess:

She had stretched one arm so high above her coiled-up cable of hair that he could see its delicacy above the sunburn; her face was flushed with sleep and her eyelids hung heavy over their pupils. *The brimfulness of her nature breathed from her.* It was a moment when

a woman's soul is more incarnate than at any other time; when the most spiritual beauty inclines to the corporeal; and sex takes the outside place in her presentation.

At their lowest these women are the pitiable creatures of whom we think with sorrow not unmixed with horror. Of our attitude toward them, Hardy's is typical. The whole justification of Tess is contained in the sub-title: *The Story of a Pure Woman.* It is distinctly significant that his attempt is this of rehabilitation, for the act of rehabilitation itself indicates a slackening of moral fibre, a relaxation of the tension which is the mark of the times in which we live. Not that there can be too much of sympathetic pity for the misfortune and degradation involved in a social order which permits the development of such lives; but even then there rises up for thoughtful consideration the necessity for some restraint which shall effectively meet the evil and combat it. To Hardy, the story of Tess Durbeyfield is that of a creature formed for love and the gratification of love, forced by an in-

evitable and inexorable chain of circumstance into actions which have for centuries borne the disapprobation of the world. We may regard the descriptions of her as characteristic of the author and of women in his thought:

It was a thousand pities, indeed, it was impossible for even an enemy to feel otherwise on looking at Tess as she sat there, with her flower-like mouth and large tender eyes, neither black nor blue nor grey nor violet; rather all those shades together and a hundred others, which could be seen if one looked into their irises—shade behind shade—tint beyond tint—round depths that had no bottom; an almost typical woman, but for the slight incautiousness of character inherited from her race.

She is the vehicle for all emotion, the Æolian harp on which every breath of fancy may make music:

Tess was conscious of neither time nor space [listening to Angel Clare's music]. The exaltation which she had described as being producible at will by gazing at a star came now without any determination of hers; she undulated upon the thin notes as upon billows, and

their harmonies passed like breezes through her, bringing tears to her eyes. The floating pollen seemed to be his notes made visible, and the dampness of the garden, the weeping of the garden's sensibility. Though near nightfall, the rank-smelling weed-flowers glowed as if they would not close for intentness, and the waves of color mixed with the waves of sound.

Hardy's whole thesis is the essential blamelessness of the woman under all the "bludgeonings of chance." If one attempts to oppose this with any doctrine of absolute right and wrong, one is hounded with the cry, as odious to our ears as to those that listened in "the spacious times of great Elizabeth"—of "Puritan," or is branded with the no less opprobrious mark of "Victorian." None the less, there remains the truth in the rigid attitude of older days, that sin is real and definite, and reaps a clear punishment.

But Hardy recognizes no sin, therefore there can be neither condemnation nor retribution. There can only be the mantle of charity which recognizes an alien condition and seeks by its

own act to remove the barriers which separate the outcast from the ninety and nine who need no repentance. This is not the keynote struck by the "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone," be it observed; it is rather the yielding to the inevitable which marks the fatalist. It is not necessary to carry the principle as far as in "Tess" to see the outcome. There are innumerable passages in which Hardy puts in the mouths of different characters comments on the institution of marriage which plainly reveal his tendency. A typical one is rather implied than expressed in this sentence from *Jude the Obscure:* "Wifedom has not yet annihilated and digested you in its vast maw as an atom which has no further individuality." Such things as this cannot be discounted as the imaginative rendering of the views of a limited group; they come from many walks of life, and with such uniformity of emphasis that one cannot doubt that they reveal a definite mental outlook. The general tenor is that marriage is an institution whose sacredness and sacramental force are nullified by its legal

status. The cynical comments of Iago on good women are echoed in varying tones and accents, yet always with the same sardonic humor:

She that was ever fair and never proud,
Had tongue at will, and yet was never loud,
Never lacked gold and yet went never gay,
Fled from her wish, and yet said, "Now I may,"
She that, being angered, her revenge being nigh,
Bade her wrong stay and her displeasure fly;
She that in wisdom never was so frail
To change the cod's head for the salmon's tail;
She that could think and ne'er disclose her mind,
See suitors following, and ne'er look behind;
She was a wight, if ever such wight were——

Des. To do what?
Iago. To suckle fools and chronicle small beer.

With such a debased view of the potentialities of marriage, it is little to be wondered at that the woman who dares to live outside its precincts assumes a glamor and a halo to which nothing in her life or aims entitles her. It is

impossible to censure her if her sister within the pale is no better than she save in the single respect of conformity to law.

From this sort of contemptuous regard it is pleasant to turn to such a point of view as that represented by George Eliot. There are few "weak sisters" in George Eliot's novels; Hetty Sorrel and Tessa are the two most notable, with Maggie Tulliver as a possible addition,—though this inclusion is somewhat doubtful, owing to the exceptional circumstances connected with the character. And in their weakness itself these are at the farthest remove from Tess and her kind.

The distinctions are important. And the chief of them lies in the element of free-will. Hetty's downfall is compassed by weakness and the force of circumstances, it is true; but there is never an instant when she does not know that what she is tasting is forbidden fruit. She goes on from one step to another in the full knowledge that she is offending against the simple code in which she has been brought up. There is no case of unconscious wrong-

doing, as we are taught to assume in Hardy. George Eliot recognizes the existence, in other words, of positive and undeniable sin. In the story of poor little Tessa, she gives us another phase of the same problem—the phase exemplified by the ignorant girl who has no knowledge to show her the instability of her fool's paradise. Yet, even here, Tessa has misgivings which, had they been coupled with greater intellectual keenness, would have shown her the wrong of which she was unwittingly guilty. Tessa is the dupe of a clever and unscrupulous man by reason of her ignorance of him and his connections; but had she known the full truth, even her simplicity would not have prevented her from understanding the moral issues at stake. In other words, both Hetty and Tessa are creatures acting of their own volition and free choice.

It follows naturally from this that marriage assumes a far different color from that with which Hardy invests it.

She says at the conclusion of *Middlemarch:*

Marriage, which has been the bourn of so many narratives, is still a great beginning as it was to Adam and Eve, who kept their honeymoon in Eden, but had their first little one among the thorns and thistles of the wilderness. It is still the beginning of the home epic—the gradual conquest or irremediable loss of that complete union which makes the advancing years a climax, and age the harvest of sweet memories in common. Some set out, like Crusaders of old, with a glorious equipment of hope and enthusiasm, and get broken by the way, wanting patience with each other and the world.

There is in her mind no possibility of extramarital relations which can surpass the legitimate relation of husband and wife. Though this relation may not be achieved, yet she sees the substitutes for it in their true light—as the makeshifts which they are. Quaintnesses in marriage there may be; crotchets and whimsicalities there often are; but these are far from being the excrescences which Hardy shows. When she portrays uneasiness in the marital relation, it usually arises from the restlessness of one or both parties, who seek to weld to-

gether incompatible elements. There is never the thought of escaping the bond, or of evading its obligations, even though the result be spiritual death to one or both.

It is notable that in this view of marriage there are not only none of the elements which make it degrading to the woman, but none which render it debasing to the man. The view which separates marriage from prostitution only by a legal ceremony, as does Hardy's, is, in the last analysis, no more creditable to the man than to the woman. Hardy's men are sensualists or emasculate; there is no middle ground. This is the defect of the so-called "French" attitude toward marriage. That sensuality can exist in marriage nowhere does George Eliot deny; but that it is the sole excuse for it she does not admit. Her recognition of the potentialities of even an unhappy marriage in the spiritual growth of man or woman is such as to render her attitude sane and wholesome even under the contemplation of domestic tragedy the most complete. In her attitude toward the "fallen" woman there is

none of the Pharisaism of mere convention, but none of the sentimentalism of the sensualist.

For it is true that the charity toward the social sins which Thomas Hardy inculcates is nothing else than the weak sentimentalism which overlies most self-indulgence. There is nothing fundamentally inspiring about the story of the plaything of human vices and passions. And when that bauble is a woman's chastity, which through age-long experience we have learned to value at a high rate, it requires a great exercise of emotional irrationality to persuade us that the bitter experiments by which our knowledge has come are to be overruled. The social instinct which visits ostracism and reprobation on these offenders is fundamentally a sound one. To oppose this Hardy has only one means at his command, the acceptance of which involves the renunciation of all our hard-won belief in the dignity of the human will. If we are to say with him that here is no sin because no freedom, either to righteousness or to something else, the case

rests complete. Under such a theory of human conduct it is impossible to make progress of any sort.

The point may be raised with propriety: What of those women in Hardy's novels who do not incur or deserve condemnation for their excesses? This raises a curious answer. Such women are almost entirely shrews in the completest sense of the term,—women who make their husbands' lives unhappy by reason of their overbearing behavior, women whose selfishness makes any serious emotion impossible to them, and women whose lusts are concealed or obscured in wedlock—these are the only alternatives available. They are concrete examples of what the Greek poet Simonides, in a bitter satire on women, described as the Fox-like group. I quote from Addison's rendering (*Spectator,* No. 209): "A second sort of female soul was formed out of the same materials that enter into the composition of a fox. Such an one is what we call a notable discerning woman, who has an insight into everything, whether it be good or bad. In this species of

females there are some virtuous and some vicious." Nearly all the women in *A Group of Noble Dames* will qualify under this description, and a good many also in *Life's Little Ironies* and *Wessex Tales.*

Such women justify the social reformer's tirade against "parasites." They are, in every sense of that term, creatures who prey upon the world in which they live. In Hardy they are specifically parasites in that they contribute nothing for their own maintenance, but drain the vitality of those about them. Stated in plain terms like these they sound most unattractive and unpromising literary material; but this is owing to the fact that we often fail to realize that parasitism is by no means incompatible with the development of graces and beauties to a very considerable extent. In the physical world this is true; and it is no less true in the moral world. Spiritual parasites are the harder to deal with from this fact. Rosamond Vincy is George Eliot's only example of the type—of whom she wrote: "She simply continued to be mild in her temper, inflexible in

her judgment, disposed to admonish her husband, and able to frustrate him by stratagem. As the years went on he opposed her less and less, whence Rosamond concluded that he had learned the value of her opinion." Hardy's women, virtuous in the cant acceptation of the term, are all of this kind.

That there is an ideal higher than any of these George Eliot perceives; though she recognizes also the impossibility of giving artistic expression to it. She it was who gave utterance to that commonplace of ordinary speech that "the happiest women, like peaceful nations, have no history," from her realization that ideal womanhood, and all womanhood as it approaches the ideal standard, must be measured not for itself alone, but as it appears in the lives of those who develop from it. We may repeat Stevenson's phrase with the greater concurrence in such a view: "When the generation is gone, when the play is over, when the thirty years' panorama has been withdrawn in tatters from the stage of the world, we may ask what has become of these great, weighty

and undying loves, and the sweethearts who despised mortal conditions in a fine credulity, and they can only show us a few songs in a bygone taste, a few actions worth remembering, and a few children who have retained some happy stamp from the disposition of their parents." Such are at once the best survivals and the most intangible.

Whether or not it is possible to reconcile the French with the Anglo-Saxon ideal of woman and marriage, is a question to which no answer is easy. One may hazard the guess that in such matters the cases on both sides which most nearly approach the ideal are not far apart, though they may have started from the opposite extremes. It is not fair to brand with the name of a nation or a school such neuroticism as Hardy's, or to exalt a genius like George Eliot's as the representative of another type or phase. Truth lies in the middle as of old. Yet it is fair to insist that a society composed of weak sisters like those whom Hardy pictures is impossible and ephemeral. It has none

of the elements which make for stability or permanence.

The contrast becomes even more clear when we turn from the situation presented by the outcasts of the social order to the problems of the woman's development as it occurs under normal conditions, which George Eliot faces and analyzes. The comparison of these problems, as they appeared a generation ago, with those which our contemporaries are trying to meet in feministic and other agitation, is illuminating in the highest degree. Her solution is as noteworthy in its differences from the "advanced" thought of the present day as in its correspondences. In many ways it is wiser and more helpful than our own, for it assumes as the fundamentals of a woman's heart and life the hopes and desires of which too frequently modern social movements, both of reform and of education, seek to divest her.

It is only by such a study of the normal woman in her daily life that we can hope to understand the falsity of such an attitude as Hardy's to the outcast woman. Such under-

standing does not produce less of pity or of sympathy, but acknowledges the need of safeguarding marriage from any sentimentalism which may stand in the way of preserving its integrity. Under any civilization there will always be weak sisters; but the tendency may be made such as to lessen the remission of the instinctive penalties and barriers with which women have sought from time immemorial to conserve and augment their power. Especially in a time like the present, when necessities of all sorts have been brought into line to change and subvert the traditional standards; when new ideals of personal liberty and individual self-realization have been developed to attack convention and custom; when economic pressure has been acknowledged a sovereign reason for the abandonment of the practices of established worth,—it must never be forgotten that weakness for a woman is a sin, and one whose gravity we are only beginning to estimate.

IV

"HER INFINITE VARIETY"

Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness.

[Proverbs.]

PERHAPS no single passage in all literature offers a better description of the influence and aims which until recently have been associated with good women than does that from which these sentences are quoted. It is only within late years that any fundamental additions have been made to the list of virtues herein catalogued, and it is a question whether these are altogether improvements.

To define or portray the aspirations and intentions of a good woman is not an easy task, and in the changing conceptions of the duties and privileges of normal women it is a rare dis-

tinction to stand in line with the soundest tendencies of the radicals and at the same time hold fast to that which has proved its value in the traditional view. George Eliot has achieved this, in the manner in which such an accomplishment most fittingly comes—without the parade of iconoclasm or the smug self-complacency of reaction. It is in her analysis of home-loving women that she has most thoroughly shown her right to be reckoned among the great interpreters of human nature.

The outstanding characteristic of George Eliot's women is the sanity and poise with which they meet the various crises which confront them. They are rarely hysterical, as are the creatures of Thomas Hardy's imagination, though at times they may display weakness or uncertainty. Even in a case like that of Gwendolen Grandcourt, where the futile groping after righteousness of an uninstructed woman forms the theme of one of the most pitiful and sordid stories in the whole series of novels, the elements of rational action are always present. As has been shown, there are no "weaker sis-

ters" in George Eliot's novels; there are no women whose lives are independent of individual choice and freedom of will. This means that there are no ignorant women, in the fullest connotation of the term.

For the inability to make a rational choice in the fundamental human relationships is the mark of genuine ignorance. All Thomas Hardy's women are therefore in the ignorant class. There are none such in the novels of George Eliot. Misguided or uninstructed these women often are, yet their instinct is toward the intelligent course. Significantly enough, this groping instinct leads them inevitably toward some form of higher education. There are, to be sure, plenty of men who can say, with Mr. Tulliver, "An over-'cute woman's no better nor a long-tailed sheep—she'll fetch none the better price for all that,"—but the woman herself realizes that in education alone lies her great hope. And so she struggles toward it as best she may in the particular circumstances of her own life. Dorothea Brooke, in her marriage to Mr. Casaubon, turned the

whole force of her young idealism into the pathetic attempt to make herself a companion to the academic interests of her future husband. To this end she strove to master dead languages; to utilize every opportunity of her wedding journey to familiarize herself with the history and art which she supposed to form the background in his mind. The tragedy of her marriage lay in the fact that these could not penetrate the shell of pedantry and formalism which encompassed her husband. Gwendolen Grandcourt, knowing as she did the falsity of the motives which led to her marriage, and aware of the wrongdoing which had preceded it, yet tried to give life to a dry branch by study and at least a rudimentary attempt at self-culture. With Esther Lyon, her love for Felix Holt began with a clash of wills over intellectual concerns.

With one exception, the most interesting case of this striving after spiritual companionship is that of Maggie Tulliver. Her attempt from earliest childhood to enter into the various interests of her brother is the instinctive answer

of the enlightened woman heart to the separative education which tradition has given to men and women. Stevenson's comment: "The little rift between the sexes is immeasurably widened by simply teaching one set of catchwords to the girls and another to the boys," holds as true now as ever, in spite of the multiple endeavors of society to bring about the equality of the sexes. George Eliot understood intellectual companionship in fullest measure; and that it could exist without sacrifice of the "feminine" qualities she sought to prove, both in her novels and in her life itself. Her marriage to George Henry Lewes offers an illustration paralleled in literary history only by the other great idyll of the Brownings—both conspicuous justifications of the belief that the education of women should enrich rather than endanger the marriage relation, by making friendship possible within it.

This is the modern attitude toward womanhood and its potentialities, which has only of recent years approached fulfilment. The time

is not so far distant when people could say, as did Montaigne in his *Essay on Friendship:*

As concerning marriage, beside that it is a covenant, the entrance into which only is free, but the continuance in it forced and compulsory, having another dependence than that of our own free-will, and a bargain commonly contracted to other ends, there almost always happens a thousand intricacies in it to unravel, enough to break the thread and to divert the current of a lively affection; whereas friendship has no manner of business or traffic with aught but itself. Moreover, to say truth, the ordinary talent of women is not such as is sufficient to maintain the conference and communication required to the support of this constancy of mind to sustain the pinch of so hard and durable a knot. And doubtless, if without this there might be such a free and voluntary familiarity contracted where not only the souls might have this entire fruition, but the bodies also might share in the alliance, and a man be engaged throughout, the friendship would certainly be more full and perfect; but it is without example that this sex has ever yet arrived at such perfection; and by the common consent of the ancient schools, it is wholly rejected from it.

The contribution of the woman movement of the present to the social advances of the last half-century has been essentially this—of recognizing in the intercourse between the sexes the possibility of relations heretofore supposed to exist within one sex alone.

Underlying all George Eliot's portraits of women there is a conception of womanhood which she foreshadows most definitely in the prelude to *Middlemarch*. Perhaps it is an exaggeration of the facts to regard St. Theresa as the prototype of woman's life; but nevertheless, there is no little truth in the conception:

> Many Theresas have been born who found for themselves no epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action, perhaps only a life of mistakes, the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the measures of opportunity, perhaps a tragic failure which found no sacred poet and sank unwept into oblivion. With dim lights and tangled circumstance they tried to shape their thought and deed in noble agreement; but after all, to common eyes their struggles around were inconsistency and formlessness, for these

later-born Theresas were helped by no coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul. Their ardor alternated between a vague ideal and the common yearning of womanhood; so that the one was disapproved as extravagance, and the other condemned as a lapse.

The medium through which this ideal of service is to be attained is always that of a worthy and beautiful love. "A supreme love," she says in *Felix Holt,* "a supreme love, a motive that gives a sublime rhythm to a woman's life, and exalts habit into partnership with the soul's highest needs, is not to be had where and how she wills; to know that high initiation she must tread where it is hard to tread, and feel the chill air and watch through darkness. It is not true that love makes all things easy; it makes us choose what is difficult." In *Romola* there are sentences which show the other side of the shield: "There is no compensation for the woman who feels that the chief relation of her life has been no more

than a mistake. She has lost her crown. The deepest secret of human blessedness has half whispered itself to her, and then forever passed her by."

The greatest example of fully rounded womanhood in all George Eliot's novels is this commanding figure of Romola, a woman who is the masterpiece of ancient saying. The fact that she is placed in an historical setting does not in the least detract from her importance as an idealized portrait. For the freedom offered by the humanism of the Renaissance, with its breadth of intellectual outlook, and limitless philosophical horizon, represents spiritual and mental possibilities which we have never surpassed and but seldom reached in the centuries which have succeeded. Romola herself was the inheritor of all this wealth of learning and enlightenment. She came to the problems of her marriage with a mind finely tempered by the discipline and understanding acquired by a long and toilsome self-cultivation. Her mind had been fully opened by contact with the greatest idealisms of centuries. It is little

wonder that such a woman can fittingly stand as protagonist for her sex.

And so she does. The ideal woman in George Eliot is of the Romola-type. This is the norm toward which all her women are turning. Dinah Morris is of this sort, *mutatis mutandis;* Maggie Tulliver works toward it by painful endeavor; Dorothea Brooke, in the eagerness of her youth, seeks to achieve this ideal. Even such helpless and hopeless creatures as Gwendolen Grandcourt and Hetty Sorrel have their vision of an ideal existence less sordid and materialistic than that with which they are familiar. It is an ideal prefiguring of a character of which it may be said, as she does, "It belongs to every large nature, when it is not under the immediate power of some strong, unquestioning emotion, to suspect itself, and doubt the truth of its own impressions, conscious of possibilities beyond its own horizon." But it is not content with this self-questioning; it takes refuge in action, in affection, and in self-sacrifice. Its affections are of the sort epitomized in a sentence like this:

"Love does not aim simply at the conscious good of the beloved object; it is not satisfied without perfect loyalty of heart; it aims at its own completeness." It feels that it is "good to be inspired by more than pity—by the belief in a heroism struggling for sublime ends, towards which the daily action of pity would only tend feebly as the dews that freshen the weedy ground to-day tend to prepare an unseen harvest in the years to come." In the more purely intellectual field such a character holds its ideas in close relation to its feelings, but never lets the latter gain undue prominence. "As a strong body struggles against fumes with the more violence when they begin to be stifling, a strong soul struggles against phantasies with all the more alarmed energy when they threaten to govern in the place of thought." Yet in spite of all this, "After all has been said that can be said about the widening influence of ideas, its remains true that they would hardly be such strong agents unless they were taken in a solvent of feeling. The great world-struggle of developing thought

is continually foreshadowed in the struggle of the affections, seeking a justification for love and hope."

This ideal is the ideal of all right-thinking women, even after a generation of unrest and social striving unparalleled in the history of woman's evolution. We have gone no further in the search for self-realization than George Eliot conceived and pictured in Romola. She has shown not only the resources created by intellectual interests, but the power for social service and humanitarian endeavor generated by supreme ethical groping. The religious motive which underlies all our life is part of the twisted fabric which she develops. To such a nature sorrow comes as part of the fulfilment of the law of being, not to be evaded or feared, but rather to be welcomed and understood. Faith comes to such, divested of its parasitic outgrowths, as the simple and sincere dependence of the soul in that which lies outside its ken—"the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

There are a number of intimate glimpses

which show the bent and direction of Romola's character. One such is Tito's comparison between Tessa and Romola:

He had felt an unconquerable shrinking from an immediate encounter with Romola. She, too, knew little of the actual world; she, too, trusted him; but he had an uneasy consciousness that behind her frank eyes there was a nature that would judge him, and that any ill-founded trust of hers sprang not from petty, brute-like incapacity, but from a nobleness which might prove an alarming touchstone.

More direct are the passages in which Romola's affection, and its disillusionment, are suggested and analyzed:

At certain moments—and this was one of them—Romola was carried, by a sudden wave of memory, back again into the time of perfect trust, and felt again the presence of the husband whose love made the world as fresh and wonderful to her as to a little child that sits in stillness among the sunny flowers: heard the gentle tones and saw the soft eyes without any lie in them, and breathed again that large free-

dom of the soul which comes from the faith that the being who is nearest to us is greater than ourselves. And in those brief moments the tears always rose: the woman's lovingness felt something akin to what the bereaved mother feels when the tiny fingers seem to lie warm on her bosom, and yet are marble to her touch as she bends over the silent bed.

From the account of her interrupted flight from Florence comes an illuminating passage:

It brought a vague but arresting sense that she was somehow violently rending her life in two: a presentiment that the strong impulse which had seemed to exclude doubt and make her path clear might after all be blindness, and that there was something in human bonds which must prevent them from being broken with the breaking of illusions. That tenderness and keen fellow-feeling for the near and the loved which are the main outgrowths of the affections, had made the religion of her life: they had made her patient in spite of natural impetuosity; they would have sufficed to make her heroic. . . . She had endured and forborne because she loved; maxims which told her to feel less, and not to cling close lest the outward

course of great nature should jar her, had been as powerless on her tenderness as they had been on her father's yearning for just fame. She had appropriated no theories; she had simply felt strong in the strength of affection, and life without that energy came to her as an entirely new problem. . . . So far as she conceived her solitary, loveless life at all, she saw it animated by a proud, stoical heroism, and by an indistinct but strong purpose of labor, that she might be wise enough to write something which would rescue her father's name from oblivion. After all, she was only a young girl—this poor Romola, who had found herself at the end of her joys.

There are some people who are afraid of such a type of womanhood as this foreshadows. They distrust it from one of two points of view, both expressions of extreme attitudes—that which regards it as "too radical," and that which declares it to be "too conservative." The reactionaries attack it because as it seems to them, it tends toward the unsexing of women. A woman whose brain is equal or superior to that of the men with whom she is brought into contact, is never a pleasant com-

panion for them. Superiority which they are willing to acknowledge and take pride in, where its possessor is a man, seems to them presumption and arrogance in a woman. Often, of course, they are absolutely right. The first effect of enlightenment, especially in its incomplete phases, is frequently an unpleasant one, but this is by no means a necessary concomitant of the higher education. The traditional conception of womanhood, by defining the sphere in which a woman's talents were to be exercised, left her no opportunity to compete with men—hence no opportunity to impose any check on them even in the matters which affected her own life. She was necessarily much more docile, easy to manage, and contented. The conservative sees all this vanishing and he fears its effect. He does not wish to see his own supremacy challenged in his household. What he does not realize is that the giving of wider opportunities to women is really nothing more than forcing wider opportunities on men. The truly radical method of procedure is that which is actually in progress

—the widening of the man's sphere to maintain his superiority over the woman with her broadening horizon.

From the radical point of view the difficulty with an ideal womanhood like George Eliot's is, though he would hardly enjoy the phrase, that it recognizes too fully the interdependence of the sexes. Even in her wildest moments, George Eliot does not conceive a world where men and women work out their destinies in a kind of persistent sex-antagonism. The history of the one woman in whom she shows this revolt is typical and significant. The princess Halm-Eberstein, Daniel Deronda's mother, is a forerunner of the now famous type of Magda, the heroine of Sudermann's play. She is a woman whose revolt is only partial and incomplete—rendered so not by her lack of ability, but by her own convictions, slow in maturing, but irresistible in their driving power. Her anxiety to secure for her son complete independence of his race and its traditions cannot prevent her passing on to him the inheritance of his grandfather's devotion. She her-

self, though in her period of rebellion she was able to cut herself off from the knowledge of her child, was not able so to conquer the recurrence of her normal wishes as to hold fast to her plan. Moreover, when she had to face the loss of her career as a singer, she could not face it alone, but sought her refuge in those things which are the common lot of all women. To the radical all this is incomprehensible. He cannot realize that equality of the sexes is quite possible without similarity of function. Instead he demands for women,—for those who are unwilling as well as for those who are not, —"equal rights—give women the ballot; give them the right to make laws; give them equal recognition in industry." What he never adds as a corollary is the simplest step in the doctrine of equality,—"Give them equal liabilities with men." The radical must learn that equality is something more fundamental then similarity of function.

An interesting and apposite discussion of the relation between the higher education as applied to men and to women is to be found in

Professor Hugo Münsterberg's chapter on "Women" in the volume entitled *American Traits*. After an exposition of the deficiencies of excessive feminization of education and culture, such as we see at the present time, he continues after this wise:

"And this condition, in which the professional callings, the whole influence on the development of the younger generation, all art and science and morality and religion, come to be moulded and stamped by women, is precisely the one which some call equality of the sexes! The truth is evident here as everywhere, that equality cannot be brought about artificially. To force equality always means merely shifting the inequality from one region to another; and if the primary inequality was the natural one, the artificial substitute must be dangerous if it be more than a temporary condition. Nature cannot act otherwise, because nature cannot tolerate real equality. Equality means in the household of nature a wasted repetition of function; equality, therefore, represents everywhere the lower stage of the development, and has to go over into differentiation of function. Nature cannot be dodged, and the growth of nations cannot escape natural laws.

To say that man and woman must be equal demands a natural correction by bringing in the differentiation of function at some other point: you may decree equality to-day, but nature takes care that we shall have, in consequence, a new kind of inequality to-morrow." The conclusion is characteristic: "Only one practical change must come in response to the urgent needs of our period: the American man must raise his level of general culture. In short, the woman's question is, in this country, as ultimately perhaps everywhere, the man's question. Reform the man, and all difficulties disappear."

Toward this fundamental relationship between the sexes George Eliot's whole conception of the woman question is directed. She realizes, more than do most of those who decry her attitude, the basic laws of development which govern women's lives. She knows that economic independence, political rights, and social liberties are only shibboleths to conceal the need for other and more long standing duties. With the problem of the surplus woman she does not deal; but in her consistent recog-

nition of the relation of the woman to her home and her children she shows conclusively that that, in her mind, was the great field of advance.

In view of this general alignment of womankind in its relations to society, one invariably reaches the question of what constitutes an ideal woman's life. This is, in effect, the question of what constitutes an ideal marriage. Necessarily, the answer varies with the needs of the individual. We say of marriage that it is a lottery, depending for its vitality upon personal qualities in the contracting parties. It was George Eliot who laid down the maxim that "Marriage must be a relation either of sympathy or conquest." How she regarded the opportunities for the development of sympathies we have seen in the case of Romola, considered as an ideal toward which our striving tends. At the same time she had no illusions as to the nature of womankind. It was into the mouth of Mrs. Poyser, sensible, worthy woman, that she put that delightful epigram: "I'm not denyin' the women are fool-

ish; God Almighty made 'em to match the men." Where inequality between the sexes occurs in her novels, it is due to lack of opportunity for the woman, not to any other cause.

One other determining factor George Eliot recognizes in studying women, of which some mention has already been made. She comments, with singular penetration and discernment, that "A woman's lot is made for her by the love she accepts." This fixes the responsibility for domestic situations equally on the shoulders of all who should bear it, for there is no woman so blind that she cannot discriminate between higher and lower forms of love. The sentimental school-girl's idea of love may be no nearer the truth than that of the woman of pleasure; yet her sentiment may serve as a makeshift touchstone whereby to approach her most vital decisions. And even the rawest girl, contemplating the possibility of marriage, has some knowledge, often inaccurate and distorted, but yet in a measure reliable, of the duties and subjections which it imposes, suf-

ficient to give her pause before she commits herself irrevocably. This is what makes such a situation as that of Sue Bridehead, with her continual plaint, "I had no idea that *that* was involved" such an impossible characterization. Virginity of spirit there is, and it is a very beautiful thing; but its manifestations are not those of an unreal ignorance or unreflecting caprice.

If the newer opportunities for women have done anything, it has been this—to make possible the acceptance only of such love as the individual woman feels to be her greatest need. It is here more than anywhere else that the relaxing of conditions has been most helpful, making it possible for the woman to go forth and conquer destiny, demanding of it the kind of marriage most worthy of her, or, if need be, to refuse to accept the ignoble alternative. By so doing she has been able to maintain the value she chose to put upon herself.

There is one other word which should be added to this—a man's reflection upon the place of a woman in his or any other's life. "I

wonder," says Felix Holt, "whether the subtle measuring of forces will ever come to measuring the force there would be in one beautiful woman whose mind was as noble as her face was beautiful—who made a man's passion for her rush in one current with all the great aims of his life." Such womanhood it is the hope of our day to develop, by education, by liberty, by responsibility; and our aims will be fulfilled by some such blending and incorporation of old ideals with new as George Eliot foresaw.

Movements develop and pass; and yet, on the whole, things are not greatly changed. The broad outlines remain the same. There is not, in any proper sense, a "woman problem"; but there are the problems of multitudes of individual women. It is impossible to legislate for all of them, for it is still true of woman that

> Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety.

The only way in which any comprehension of the practical solution of the questions raised

by the million and more cases which come before the investigator can be attained is by following somewhat the plan outlined, of unrestricted education, coupled with the normal human and womanly responsibilities. It is no question of sex warfare or of unsexing; it is merely a recognition of the principle, voiced by many others as well as by George Eliot:

> A woman's rank
> Lies in the fulness of her womanhood—
> Therein alone she is royal.

This royalty of spirit can only come through the recognition of her woman's difference, her woman's need, and her woman's duty.

V

MEN OF STRAW

THERE is nothing rarer in literary history than for a man to portray characters of both sexes with equal success. In the drama it is easier than in other literary forms; but this is perhaps because the drama, *per se,* is only a quasi-literary genre, depending for its success on the wholly incalculable element of the actor's personality, which may supplement the author's invention and conceal his ineptitudes to unlimited extent. The great novelists have been far from successful in this respect. Richardson, with a singularly feminine perception, is able to trace the emotions and perplexities in the soul of Clarissa Harlowe; but he cannot make of Lovelace a villain of flesh and blood, any more than Shakespeare could create such a being as we might ever fear to meet

in Iago, or Goethe such an one in Mephistopheles. Fielding draws no women in whose verisimilitude we can believe, with the possible, and even then only occasional, exceptions in the daughters of delight who stray into his pages. The mutual antipathy between the two is only another instance of the same thing in a highly specialized form. Dickens shows the same inability to present female character in its completeness; and Thackeray, for all his exceptional achievement in Becky Sharp, must bear the same criticism.

In view of all this, it is small wonder that neither George Eliot nor Thomas Hardy should succeed especially notably in the representation of both men and women. Of her ambitious studies of men, as distinguished from her vignettes, George Eliot has only three of unquestioned success—Adam Bede, Silas Marner, and Tito Melema. Hardy has scarcely more. The rough, self-tormenting Mayor of Casterbridge, Henchard, is one of these; Diggory Venn the reddleman is another. These are the most conspicuous examples, standing

almost alone, for reasons which will presently appear. What is significant is the manner of Hardy's failure to depict upright, straight living men. It is lacking in exactly the same degree that George Eliot is lacking, and for almost the same reasons.

If one may lay down a maxim in such a case, ignoring that other venerable fallacy—

Woman's at best a contradiction still,

it may be said that women are not able to represent the healthy animal vitality, which in its lowest forms becomes brutality, through an artistic medium. This is due to the same mental qualities which credit them with the preponderance of wit over humor. It follows, therefore, that characters in which they seek to represent the degenerative forces, let us say, must be of the subtler types. This explains the extraordinary insight which could produce Tito Melema. Such a character as Tom Jones could never come from a woman's brain. There is nothing in her understanding to correspond with it. When these subtler forms of degener-

ating or disintegrating character are brought into the realm of the physical passions, they become studies of decadence. This is what Hardy does. Where George Eliot traces the influence of mental traits on actual conduct, Hardy indicates the effect of physical traits on behavior; and these studies form the basis of masculine character in their respective novels. The danger is that which actually results in several of George Eliot's novels—the substitution of a man of straw for a flesh-and-blood mortal. That this should be the case with her is not so surprising as that it should be true also of Hardy. Yet examination proves the truth of the contention.

One of the most conspicuous failures is George Eliot's figure of Daniel Deronda, a creature "without form and void," to whom Stevenson could refer in this delightful fashion: "Accepted lovers treat women to Grandisonian airs marked with a suspicion of fatuity. I am not quite certain that women do not like this kind of thing; but really, after having bemused myself over 'Daniel Deronda,' I have

given up trying to understand what they like." This is an attempt to reproduce, through the medium of literature, a man whose sympathies are sufficiently alert, whose sensitiveness is sufficiently great, and whose intelligence is sufficiently keen to lift him above his fellows by force of character and talents.

George Eliot's description of her hero illustrates both her ideal and her shortcomings: "His face had that disturbing kind of form and expression which threatens to affect opinion—as if one's standard were somehow wrong. His voice, heard now for the first time, was to Grandcourt's toneless drawl, which had been in her ears every day, as the deep notes of a violoncello to the broken discourse of poultry and other lazy gentry in the afternoon sunshine. Grandcourt, she inwardly conjectured, was perhaps right in saying that Deronda thought too much of himself:—a favorite way of explaining a superiority that humiliates." That this is the consistent and permanent impression, a later quotation will show. It is taken from the period of Gwendolen's confession to

Deronda of her hatred for her husband, and her wish to encompass his death. "Devoted as these words were, they widened his spiritual distance from her, and she felt it more difficult to speak: she had a vague need of getting nearer to that compassion which seemed to be regarding her from a halo of superiority, and the need turned into an impulse to humble herself more." Such a character, endowed with the attributes of humanity as well as with the ideal virtues, we are familiar with in Henry Esmond, but nowhere else among the great novels is it to be found. Though a woman could conceive such a character, as undoubtedly George Eliot did, she could not reproduce it.

Hardy comes to grief over the same rock, though he chooses a slightly different angle of approach. There are few studies of men in his work which are free from that hall-mark of decadence, sexual perversion. Of these, one which purports to be the portrait of a pure man, Giles Winterborne, in *The Woodlanders,* is singularly lacking in reality or mascu-

linity. What should be strength and self-control becomes pusillanimous acquiescence in the situation as he finds it, to the detriment of the artistic likeness. What should be the proud sense of physical integrity in Angel Clare and Henry Knight becomes unenlightened, formalistic insistence on a nebulous kind of unsophistication, quite unlike what either of them would hold needful for himself. Not only are the doctrines which they hold and practise inconsistent, but the characters from which these theories develop are self-contradictory.

The strange, conglomerate image called Jude Fawley is another case in point. It shows, more definitely than either of the others, the fallacy of Hardy's method of approach. In *Jude,* he has tried to show the influence of sex upon a man's development. Jude has three vices, if they may be so grouped—wine, women, and Christminster. Physically he is at the mercy of the first; physically and spiritually at the mercy of the second; and spiritually at the mercy of the third. In a sense, indeed, the influence of Christminster upon Jude is a

physical one—much like the "waving censers and the anthems loud" of Tennyson's conception. It is impossible to construct a character of depth and verisimilitude upon this basis. The wholesome, open-air characteristics which exist everywhere in some measure, are utterly absent. Even Jude's physical intemperance is an anæmic thing, not to be compared to the frankly sensual excesses of Tom Jones or Roderick Random. There is cure for such incontinence as theirs; the decadence of Jude is past remedy.

In fairness it must be admitted that where Hardy undertakes to show the effects of what Stevenson calls the "midsummer passion" of love, to picture the lyric affection between a man and a maid, he succeeds with remarkable power, such as George Eliot nowhere shows. It is not an easy matter to understand the intense emotion which is not far from adolescent throes; and Hardy is singularly skilful in doing so. An example in point is taken from Tess:

Every see-saw of her breath, every wave of her blood, every pulse singing in her ears, was a voice that joined with nature in revolt against her scrupulousness. Reckless, inconsiderate acceptance of him, to close with him at the altar, revealing nothing and chancing discovery at that first act in her drama; to snatch ripe pleasure before the iron teeth of pain could have time to shut upon her; that was what love counselled; and in almost a terror of ecstasy Tess confusedly divined that, despite her many months of lonely self-chastisement, wrestlings, communings, schemes to lead a future of austere isolation, love's counsel would prevail.

But it should never be forgotten that young love is not by any means the only love, and that perpetual adolescence is a pathological condition. There is nothing in George Eliot to correspond with this lyricism of Hardy. Even in the idyllic portions of *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss* she fails to reach the same height of intensity and passion; but it is more than compensated for by the clearness and steadiness of her more limited vision.

In the representation of such types as those

attempted in Daniel Deronda and Felix Holt, George Eliot's blunders are perhaps the inevitable ones. In Deronda she conceives, to quote Stevenson once more, "a man who delights women by his feminine perceptions," overlooking completely the other side of the balance, that he "will often scatter his admirers by a chance explosion of the under side of man." There is no evidence that Deronda ever behaved with less than Chesterfieldian propriety. Antipathies he has none, even to such an obvious reprobate as Mirah's father, and in that instance the forbearance of a young man for the parent of his beloved does not fully account for his extraordinary patience. An episode, which, of course, had no place in the novel, recording the developments on some trying occasion after the marriage of Deronda, when the elder Cohen undertook to re-establish himself in his daughter's household, would doubtless, if faithfully transcribed, shed a very favorable light upon the nature of the master of the family. But nothing of the sort appears.

In the same way Felix Holt is unconvincing.

His original objection to Esther Lyon seems to lie in the more or less commonplace facts of her wearing silk stockings and reading Byron; and his attraction for her rests largely on the scolding to which he treats her and his William Morris style of clothing and manners. There is no power of character shown to account for developments. Indeed, this is one of the episodes which a man of Hardy's genius would have carried by its sheer lyrical intensity. The ratiocinative and intellectual elements would be left out, probably to advantage, if there were not substituted erotic distortions in their place. Whether Felix Holt would become a more virile character is another question; he would certainly be a more convincing lover.

A word should be said about Adam Bede, who is a notable exception to the general weakness of the men whom George Eliot offers as typical of the average, normal man. In writing of him her work was sufficiently that of portraiture to free her from the difficulties incident to independent creation. In following the development of a special character, her nat-

ural defects are concealed or remedied. This same fact accounts for the extraordinary success of her vignettes, pen-portraits of unusual power, of which more in their place.

George Eliot's studies of men may be classified roughly into three general groups. In the first group fall such highly specialized figures as those we have been discussing—studies of excellent intention and indifferent execution, like those of Felix Holt, Daniel Deronda, and Philip Wakem; portraits or realistic studies, usually of exceptional brilliance, such as Adam Bede, Silas Marner, and Amos Barton; and finally a group which includes such varying figures as Lydgate, Tito Melema, Tom Tulliver, Will Ladislaw and Grandcourt. Outside of these are her vignettes of peasants and of country gentry, which form a separate and distinct category. In examining these groups it is a curious fact that the most artistically satisfying are those of the two latter classes, especially the last. It is almost as if her sympathies weakened her insight regarding those whose idealism she was most anxious to uphold. In

the analysis of characters for whom she has little or no affection, such as Matthew Jermyn, the corrupt steward of *Felix Holt,* her perceptions are never at fault. In showing the mental and moral degradation of Tito Melema, she makes no blunder, from the first thoughtless moment of reticence to the last penetrating comment of Romola's:

There was a man to whom I was very near, so that I could see a great deal of his life, who made almost every one fond of him, for he was young, and clever, and beautiful, and his manners to all were gentle and kind. I believe, when I first knew him, he never thought of anything cruel or base. But because he tried to slip away from everything that was unpleasant, and cared for nothing else so much as his own safety, he came at last to commit some of the basest deeds, such as make men infamous. He denied his father, and left him to misery; he betrayed every trust that was reposed in him, that he might keep himself safe and get rich and prosperous. Yet calamity overtook him.

With the representation of Lydgate she shows herself equally discerning. Her deli-

cacy of touch in portraying the fine and evanescent idealisms of his early professional career, the clear vision which shows the desperate misfortune of an ill-placed affection, and the slow moral disintegration resulting from an unworthy marriage, both combine to make a picture possessing the pitifulness which comes only from sympathy unbiased by lack of knowledge. To a less complete degree this is true of Will Ladislaw. Grandcourt and Tom Tulliver are less sympathetic studies; one feels in them the same broad charity to excuse and forgive. It is in the portraits drawn from life that her most unforced artistry is seen. Observation replaces theoretic judgment, and produces a sureness of touch not to be attained by other means.

Such a classification assumes significance if it leads, as in this case, to the discovery that among George Eliot's men there is no one to be reckoned in the same relation to other men that Romola bears to others among the women. As in Deronda, where we should have a human figure of heroic aspirations, of masculine pro-

portions, and of mortal tenderness, we are shown a man of straw, labelled as in the old morality plays, with the names of the several virtues he is designed to exhibit.

Fortunately, these do not exhibit the whole range of George Eliot's observations of men. Among those sketches which I have called vignettes there are many which show especial charm and merit. Usually these are figures taken from the humbler walks of life, though this is not always true. Sir Christopher Cheverel, Philip Debarry, and Rufus Lyon are among these. Philip Debarry especially is a character of unusual charm. There is only one instance in which he appears, but we become firm friends at the end of it. I know of few more appealing sketches than this, in which the young patrician, wishing to express his gratitude to the Dissenting clergyman, Rufus Lyon, for the return of valuable papers, allows himself to be held to his word in an embarrassing juncture rather than be untrue to the promptings of his own fastidious sense of

honor. A single passage visualizes both the actors in this bit of comedy:

But when he rose the next morning, his mind, once more eagerly active, was arrested by Philip Debarry's letter, which still lay open on his desk, and was arrested by precisely that portion which had been unheeded the day before.—"I shall consider myself doubly fortunate if at any time you can point out to me some method by which I may procure you as lively a satisfaction as I am now feeling, in that full and speedy relief from anxiety which I owe to your considerate conduct."

To understand how these words would carry the suggestion they actually had for the minister in a crisis of peculiar personal anxiety and struggle, we must bear in mind that for many years he had walked through life with the sense of having for a space been unfaithful to what he esteemed the highest trust ever committed to man—the ministerial vocation. In a mind of any nobleness, a lapse into transgression against an object still regarded as supreme, issues in a new and purer devotedness, chastised by humility and watched over by a passionate regret. So it was with the ardent spirit which animated the little body of Rufus Lyon. Once in his life he had been blinded, deafened, hur-

ried along by rebellious impulse; he had gone astray after his own desires, and had let the fire die out on the altar; and as the true penitent, hating his self-besotted error, asks from all coming life duty instead of joy, and service instead of ease, so Rufus was perpetually on the watch lest he should ever again postpone to some private affection a great public opportunity which to him was equivalent to a command.

And so the little clergyman begged Debarry to arrange for him a debate between Dissent and Establishment, and the patrician kept to the letter of his promise! We know little else than this of him; but it is enough to make of him a permanent friend.

So it is with Sir Christopher Cheverel, with his passion for architecture, his favorite airs, and his "black-eyed monkey"; with Sir Hugo Mallinger, and his generous care for the child of a woman he had loved; and with many others beside. Among humbler folk there are almost too numerous instances for mention. The whole company of worthies at the "Rainbow Inn"; the gay Florentine patrons of Nello the

barber, himself one of the most delightful of them all; the mad painter Piero di Cosimo, the pedlar Bratti Ferravecchi and the rest, and the sinister shadow of Baldassarre—all these are folk whom we meet in daily life, and are to be held fortunate if we esteem at their true worth.

It is perhaps most fully in these vignettes that we get the fruition of George Eliot's observation of men. They present, in artistic form, the commentary of one who sees much at a glance and expresses what she sees in shrewd, clear, and often epigrammatic sentences. The condensation in these sketches is tremendous and their vigor unexampled. Hardy has the same faculty. He rarely makes a mistake in the psychology and delineation of these minor characters. The waits in *The Return of the Native,* the farmers and shepherds in *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *Under the Greenwood Tree*—simple transcripts of everyday experience, are among the most delightful portions of his work. In so far as they deal with men, they may also be called the only uniformly successful studies,

Contrast, for instance, the virile, if angular development of Henchard, in *The Mayor of Casterbridge,* with any of the subtler characters; or compare the cleanly-drawn figure of Farmer Crick at Talbothays Dairy with any of the less masculine heroes. Farmer Melbury, of *The Woodlanders,* in his passionate anxiety to serve his daughter's best interests, is a man of vitality far outweighing that of Angel Clare or Clym Yeobright and their like.

The psychology of a minor character offers an interesting field for speculation. There are characters of secondary rank by reason of accidental position—people of whom one feels that they have a history of their own, available whenever occasion serves for its production, though not necessarily pertinent to the narrative of the moment. Such folk may well achieve greatness, though they be not born to it. Sometimes characters are minor through their own constitution—weak creatures they are whose individualities cannot overpower their circumstances, or "waylay Destiny, and bid him stand and deliver." And still a third

group is of those whose greatness is, as it were, thrust upon them—men whose external history gives them a prominence to which nothing in their lives or characters entitles them. Of this class are many of the principals whom we have been discussing. Half-successes and positive failures like these are the truest index to an author's mental attitude. To have indicated truly the outlines of many personalities widely divergent is of more worth than to have failed in the drawing of one or two ambitious attempts. Differing as they do from one another in so many matters both of structure and detail, it is interesting to find, both in Thomas Hardy and George Eliot, the curious similarity, that their minor characters are men, their principals, men of straw!

VI

"THE SILVER ITERANCE"

Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—toll
The silver iterance—only minding, Dear,
To love me also in silence with thy soul.
—*E. B. Browning.*

IT is the business of an artist to give permanent form and record to those emotions and aspirations which lie too deep for ordinary speech in the lives of men. Such fundamental yearnings cannot, and should not, be lightly laid bare; but it is fitting that those who can widely perceive and generously interpret should preserve these flowers of the spirit. The *Sonnets from the Portuguese* give lasting expression to such an experience; and Spenser's immortal *Epithalamion*—the

Song made in lieu of many ornaments,
With which my love should duly have been
dect,

> Which, setting off through hasty accidents
> Ye would not stay your due time to expect,
> But promist both to recompense;
> Be unto her a goodly ornament,
> And for short time an endless moniment,

is a permanent tribute to the spiritual forces in life. Montaigne's *Essay on Friendship* commemorates an ideally perfect friendship, and the sonnets of *Astrophel to Stella* owe their force and intensity to the literal obedience to the command

> Fool, said my Muse to me, look in thy heart and write.

To this record of passionate love, "wherein both souls and bodies might have entire fruition," George Eliot gives no contribution. Love of many kinds there is in plenty, but so strong is her sense of the tragic absence of perfect affection, ideally given and received, that she does not venture to set down the story of those exceptional cases of the love that many waters cannot part. The one great love with which she deals is the story of a misplaced affection. On the other hand, she does not pre-

sent the stories of sordid, brutal passions, such as men like Hardy use for the framework of their novels. None of her instances of illicit love are of this kind. The sin of Arthur Donnithorne with Hetty is the sin of undisciplined, ignorant youth; such, in all probability, was the wrongdoing between Mrs. Transome and Matthew Jermyn; while of the liaison between Grandcourt and Mrs. Glasher we know too little to judge. It is significant of George Eliot's tendency that though the supreme affection of a man for a woman is never directly pictured, there are many folk who give the best of themselves in their faulty and imperfect loves. This is true of Tito Melema. His love for Romola, cramped and stunted though it was by his weakness, was yet the highest expression of which he was capable. He is only the most striking example out of many similar ones.

On the other side of the shield the portraiture is far more complete and vigorous. Perhaps this is because a woman's whole life can so thoroughly be mastered by the story of her

heart, which plays only a part in the history of a man. More probably it is due to a fundamental inability, common to all save a few rare spirits, to set down the most vital truths of nature. We love to say that romance is a thing of the past, because our own spirits are too dull to perceive it; to insist that the instinctive spiritual recognitions, by which are created the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace, are but the idle vaporings of overwrought brains; and to believe that the world in which

> the unfit
> Contrarious moods of men recoil away,
> To isolate pure spirits, and permit
> A place to stand and love in for a day,
> With darkness and the death-hour rounding it,

is naught save vain fantasy and idyllic dreaming. It may be so; but it is more to be feared that we have lost the spiritual insight which keeps us in touch with the delicacies of feeling and opens our senses to the music of the spheres.

But even the highest feeling may meet with

frustration and failure in its hope. There is no more pitiful story than that of the ruin wrought by his marriage out of the stuff of Lydgate's life; and in the representation of this tragedy George Eliot reaches perhaps the highest level of realistic portraiture. For Lydgate is conceived as the type of the idealist whose vision of a world set free needs only the co-operation of a devoted woman to liberate it and translate it into action. At the time of his arrival at Middlemarch,

> Lydgate was but seventy-and-twenty, an age at which many men are quite common—at which they are hopeful of achievement, resolute in avoidance, thinking that Mammon shall never put a bit in their mouths and get astride their backs, but rather that Mammon, if they have anything to do with him, shall draw their chariot . . . . He was one of those rarer lads who early get a decided bent, and make up their minds that there is something particular in life which they would like to do for its own sake, and not because their fathers did it.

Of Rosamond Vincy, the woman for whom Lydgate's love was awakened, we have already

had occasion to speak. The story of the courtship, the illusion and artifice by which it was carried on, and its ultimate end in marriage, are all told with tender and regretful clearness. That Lydgate was hurried into matrimony, although unconsciously, we know from indications such as this: "When a man has seen the woman whom he would have chosen if he had intended to marry speedily, his remaining a bachelor will usually depend on her resolution rather than on his." And then the tragedy begins:

Between Lydgate and Rosamond there was that total missing of each other's mental track, which is too evidently possible even between persons who are continually thinking of each other. To Lydgate it seemed that he had been spending month after month in sacrificing more than half of his best intent and best power to his tenderness for Rosamond, bearing her little claims and interruptions without impatience, and, above all, bearing without betrayal of bitterness to look through less and less of interfering illusion at the blank, unreflecting surface her mind presented to his ardor which he had fancied that the ideal wife

must somehow worship as sublime, though not in the least knowing why. But his endurance was mingled with a self-discontent which, if we know how to be candid, we shall confess to make more than half our bitterness under grievances, wife or husband included. It always remains true that if we had been greater, circumstances would have been less strong against us.

In this case the tragedy was not so much one of the externals of life but of the loss of the powers of mind and heart which are of greater value than all else. "For he was very miserable. Only those who know the supremacy of the intellectual life—the life which has a seed of ennobling thought and purpose within it—can understand the grief of one who falls from that serene activity into the absorbing, soul-wasting struggle with worldly annoyances." To such a struggle there could only be one outcome, and George Eliot's reflection contains the saddest recognition of the result:

We are not afraid of telling over and over again how a man comes to fall in love with a woman and be wedded to her, or else be fatally

parted from her. Is it due to the excess of poetry or of stupidity that we are never weary of describing what King James called a woman's "makdom and her fairness," never weary of listening to the twanging of the old Troubadour strings, and are comparatively uninterested in that other kind of "makdom and fairness" which must be wooed with industrious thought and patient renunciation of small desires? In the story of this passion, too, the development varies; sometimes it is the glorious marriage, sometimes frustration and final parting. And not seldom the catastrophe is wound up with that other passion, sung by the Troubadours. For in the multitude of middle-aged men who go about their vocations in a daily course determined for them in much the same way as the tie of their cravats, there is always a good number who meant to shape their own deeds and alter the world a little. The story of their coming to be shapen after the average, and fit to be packed by the gross, is hardly ever told, even in their consciousness; for perhaps their ardor for generous, unpaid toil cooled as imperceptibly as the ardor of their youthful loves, till one day their earlier self walked like a ghost in its old home, and made the new furniture ghastly—nothing in the world more subtle than the process of their gradual change! In the beginning they in-

haled it unknowingly: you and I may have sent some of our breath toward infecting them, when we uttered our conforming falsities, or drew our silly conclusions; or perhaps it came with the vibrations of a woman's eyes.

This is what happened to Lydgate. In the reverse order, it was partly what Savonarola's influence saved Romola from—the negation of the higher self by baser demands. It is discouraging to contemplate such an end to human endeavor and to human love. The old, ascetic ideal of celibacy were better than this gradual and insidious deterioration. It is worth while to notice the differences between these effects of unhappy marriage upon Lydgate and upon Romola. The last sentence of a previous citation indicates the point of approach: *"If we had been greater, circumstances would have been less strong against us."* Lydgate was not strong enough to withstand the continual pressure of his wife's pettiness and small-mindedness, and the bitterness which resulted from this made an additional factor in his destruction. The same bitterness, which

led Romola to seek to evade her duties in flight, was met and overcome by Fra Girolamo's powerful interference. But in her case the bitterness passed away in a higher self-renunciation than any which could have been achieved without the antecedent suffering.

Truly regarded, this is the end of all sorrow—that it brings with it a higher sense of duties and a deeper fidelity to the ideal of service. That this was George Eliot's sense of it we may gather from the words which she put into the mouth of Savonarola, during the important conversation just referred to: "Man cannot choose his duties. You may choose to forsake your duties, and choose not to have the sorrow which they bring. But you will go forth; and what will you find, my daughter? Sorrow without duty—bitter herbs, and no bread with them. If there is a cry of anguish, you, my daughter, because you know the meaning of that cry, should be there to still it . . . Sorrow has come to teach you a new worship."

Too often we forget this in our rebellion against the laws or barriers that separate us

from our desires. When there grows up in us, as in Lydgate, a bitterness against fate and ourselves, we have lost the greater part of what makes for spiritual growth. Thereby we forget that out of distress and suffering there comes a wisdom higher than ourselves, and one which we can attain in no other way. And out of this suffering comes patience, "and patience worketh experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed."

Some such end is the goal of all George Eliot's love-stories, whether they be tragic or joyous. We are not allowed to forget the beauty and freshness and charm of human love; but we are neither allowed to ignore the strength and sweetness which should come from love tested by tribulation.

At the opposite extreme is love as Hardy knows it—the love which in its lowest forms is licentious, often, and brutal; which is mincing and artificial in its more common forms; and which, among those who should represent the highest phases of development, is either the torrential passion—"too like the lightning,

which doth cease to be Ere one can say 'It lightens,' "—or a bodiless creation, compact of metaphysics and sentiment. There is either a ruthless denial of the fleshly lusts, or an equally ruthless glorification of them. Swinburne's paradoxical chorus expresses the situation as well as words can:

"We have seen thee, O Love, thou are fair; thou art goodly, O Love,
Thy wings make light in the air as the wings of a dove.
Thy feet are as winds that divide the stream of the sea;
Earth is thy covering to hide thee, the garment of thee.
Thou art swift and subtle and blind as a flame of fire.
Before thee the laughter, behind thee the tears of desire.
And twain go forth beside thee, a man with a maid;
Her eyes are the eyes of a bride, whom delight makes afraid;
As the breath in the buds that stir is her bridal breath;—
But Fate is the name of her, and his name is Death."

Out of the disintegration of such loves there can spring no such spiritual poise and dignity as comes from the other forms. The result is necessarily passion, destruction, and death or dishonor.

These loves impose no duties upon the lovers. Angel Clare sees no human duty to prevent his leaving Tess upon the discovery of her misfortune. The case is exactly parallel with Romola's determination to leave Tito; but both the attempted flight and its result lead to opposite ends. For Romola, after her second departure, returns to her duties as a patrician and a woman stronger and nobler than before, able to take up her share of the city's life, and to restore tranquillity and comfort to those whom her husband's misdeeds had wronged. Angel Clare is driven back to Tess by the serpent lashes of the Eumenides; chastened and broken in spirit, he returns to the woman upon whom his desertion had brought the bitterest fate known to womankind, only to see her ruin complete. Of his own blood-guiltiness he has no realization. It does not occur to him

that in her own person Tess prefigures the atonement of one for the sins of many. In slightly different fashion Sue Bridehead forces upon others the retribution which should justly overtake herself. The story of her marriage to Phillotson, her desertion of him, though by his permission, and her final rehabilitation by means of the formal legalism of a remarriage, is an instance of suffering which should have found its corrective in a sense of duty. The fact that Phillotson is a man of doubtful attractiveness, save of character, is not material. There is a curious description of him, which shows at once the crudity and the insight of Hardy's work:

"I can mind the man," remarks the Widow Edlin of Phillotson, "I can mind the man very well. A very civil, honorable liver—but Lord —I don't want to wound your feelings—but—there be certain men here and there that no woman of any niceness can stomach. I should have said he was one."

From this speech Sue retired in confusion, and Jude followed her in anxious solicitude.

"I don't mind her roughness one bit."

"What is it, then?"
"It is that what she says is—is true!"

That a woman, feeling this repulsion, as Sue did from the beginning, should nevertheless have consented to yoke herself for life with its object, is evidence of fundamental ignorance in the first instance; that, being free from him, any vague hope of reparation should force her back to him, even in the revulsion of feeling incident to such an event as the murder of her children by "Father Time," is indisputable proof of thoroughgoing ignorance of basic human duties and privileges.

The comparison between Romola and Sue is perhaps an apposite one in this connection. What Romola is brought to realize is the larger duty to an impersonal ideal which demands the subordination of her own personality, even to the extent of remaining with a man for whom her original love had given place to contempt. What Sue made the basis of her action was an individual rebellion against a situation which demanded all her gifts of mind and heart to

overcome and ameliorate. Romola achieved the independence of her life; Sue was broken to the level of sordid subservience to the call of the flesh.

It has always been difficult to understand the meaning of the pronouncement that "He who would save his life must lose it." In Romola and Sue we have illustrations which show in some fashion the out-working of the paradox. A positive duty is that which lies above and beyond the individual self-development. Hardy admits no such possibility; and therefore his universe has nothing stable to which frail humanity may cling for safety. It is little wonder that the end is invariably tragedy and ironic mirth.

There is another phase in which the differentiation between George Eliot and Hardy is especially strongly marked. This is in regard to their view of the voluntary nature of the affections. To Hardy the idea that it is possible to set a watch over one's emotions is, on the face of it, preposterous. He does not admit any self-control strong enough to combat

the instinct for sex, or any need for combating it either physically or emotionally. George Eliot's position we can judge; in *Middlemarch* she makes this comment: "When a tender affection has been storing itself in us through many of our years, the idea that we could accept any exchange for it seems to be a cheapening of our lives. And we can set a watch over our emotions and our constancy as we can over other treasures."

The point might be raised: Which of these two views holds the truest appreciation of the value of the affections? George Eliot's self-restrained, conservative feeling seems at first sight a more pedestrian emotion than that which Hardy portrays. It sounds more prosaic, lacking in intensity, in enthusiasm, even in vitality as contrasted with Hardy's glowing, devouring flame. We are asked to judge upon the basis of the immediate effect, not by any tedious calculation of the result after laborious years. Of course there are many forms of love, and many expressions of it, ranging from the passionate cry "I charge you, O ye daughters

of Jerusalem, by the roes, by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awaken my love until he please," to the no less intense but far more tranquil assurance:

I love thee to the depth and breadth and
height
My soul can reach, when groping out of
sight
For the ends of being, and ideal grace.

In Hardy, so easy is the transference of affection from one to another, among both men and women, that we are compelled to believe that the intense passion must be lacking in permanence, if not in immediate strength. The love that gains in its intensity from community of interests, similarity of tastes, and congeniality, may be as intense as that which rests on physical allurements; but no such basis for permanence is shown or expected in Hardy's pictures. The love of Diggory Venn the reddleman for Thomasin Yeobright, which comes nearest to the union of passionate intensity with sound intellectual comradeship, is none the less a variant upon the old theme,

Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain.

"The silver iterance" is spoken in many phrases and in many ways throughout the novels of Hardy and of George Eliot. It is always a joyous thing to hear—"Is it due to an excess of poetry or of stupidity that we are never weary of listening to the twanging of the old Troubadour strings?"—and it is a theme whose freshness we should never be allowed to forget. But we may fairly ask that we be also reminded of that other qualification, that beside the continual repetition we may also know the love that lives in silence in the soul. Of these silences Hardy gives no glimpse. Among the men and women of middle life who appear throughout his stories, there are none in whose stillness we can hear the echoes of that earlier iteration. The youthful love, be it never so furious, dies out leaving gray, cold ashes, without a spark which may kindle new fires. George Eliot, on the contrary, though she shows so much less of the "silver iterance," has memorialized the silences,

Between Amos Barton and Milly there existed the silent love; Sir Christopher kept this for Lady Cheverel; and Adam Bede's love for Dinah was a silent proof of the thing which stood beyond the realm of speech. These are but a few of many instances which might be cited; but they serve to illustrate the tendency. They represent something more vital than the test of mere laborious time, for they deal with the inner guarded constancy which is a real treasure.

We shall always love to listen to the "silver interance"; but it will continue to be the distinction of only a few rare spirits to give utterance to the silence of the soul.

VII

THE INCREMENT OF YEARS

ALMOST all of us have a fairly clear idea of "that which should accompany old age." Whatever the rank of society, the conception of "honor, love, obedience, troops of friends," shows but little variation. This does not mean that all portraits of old age are alike; but it does mean a uniformity of feeling in regard to the place which age should occupy in the social order. In addition, it presupposes a certain background of relationships, past and present, which serve to limit and define character. This is perhaps the most interesting view of advancing years, as it is the simplest.

The pictures of old age in Thomas Hardy and in George Eliot are especially rich in this interweaving of motives. The sentiment of parenthood is shown with especial charm. To

Hardy, for whom so few of the human relations deserve reference, this receives uniformly sympathetic and deferential treatment. Of his studies of character none are more convincing than those in which the unselfish devotion of father for daughter or mother for son is shown. George Eliot, with the same delicacy of feeling, none the less fails to present any such intensified portraits as the three in which Hardy reaches his greatest power. These three are striking instances. The devotion of Mrs. Yeobright to her son Clym; the love of Henchard for Elizabeth Jane; and the passionate watchfulness of Melbury for Grace, are among the characterizations which we should not wish to lose. In this instance, at least, Hardy has abandoned the neuroticism which signalizes most of his work, and has set his artistic gifts at the service of a human theme of simple, sincere earnestness and dignity.

The love of Henchard for his step-daughter is the central motive of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. After a grim opening episode—

the selling of his wife by Henchard in a fit of drunken despair—an interval of seventeen or eighteen years shows the wife seeking for her lost husband, and accompanied by her daughter, presumably the same who was sold with her. The discovery of her husband in the person of the Mayor of Casterbridge, his single-minded anxiety to repair the wrong of earlier days, and the recognition of her child, are merely the setting for a larger drama. For it becomes known, through accident, that this is not his daughter, who had died in early childhood, but another. The steps in his emotional development are worth tracing.

Of Henchard himself we get an illuminating suggestion in one brief sentence describing his attitude toward bookkeeping and kindred necessities of a business career: "Henchard himself was mentally and physically unfit for grubbing subtleties from soiled paper; he had, in a modern sense, received the education of Achilles, and found penmanship a tantalizing art." He was the kind of man whose affections as well as his exactions might

well prove tyrannical. Of the watch which he set over himself and his determination in whatever he undertook, a single instance will suffice: "He pressed on the preparation for his union, or rather reunion, with this pale creature in a dogged, unflinching spirit which did credit to his conscientiousness. Nobody would have conceived from his outward demeanor that there was no amatory fire or pulse of romance acting as stimulant to the bustle going on in his gaunt, great house; nothing but three large resolves—one to make amends to his neglected Susan, another to provide a comfortable home for Elizabeth Jane under his paternal eye, and a third to castigate himself with the thorns which these restitutory acts brought in their train, among them the lowering of his dignity in public opinion by marrying so comparatively humble a woman."

Of Elizabeth Jane it should be noted that she is one of the exceptional instances—almost the only instance in Hardy—of a beautiful human character rising out of a welter

of corrupting influences. With her heredity Hardy has no concern; he merely notes the unexplainable phenomenon—fortunately a less rare one than he would assume. It is not surprising that the discovery that this child was not his own should have produced a strong revulsion of feeling in Henchard; nor that under the influence of this feeling he should have treated her with coldness and a measure of injustice. Of his gradual return to his older feeling we get occasional glimpses. "He had liked the look of her face as she answered him from the stairs. There had been affection in it; and above all things what he desired now was affection from anything that was good and pure. She was not his own; yet, for the first time, he had a faint dream that he might get to like her as his own, if she would only continue to love him."

In the misfortunes and reverses which beset him, this desire for the affection of his step-daughter continued the one constant factor in Henchard's life. "Shorn one by one of all other interests, his life seemed centering on

the personality of this step-daughter whose presence but recently he could not endure." "In truth, a great change had come over him with regard to her, and he was developing the dream of a future lit by her filial presence, as though that way alone could happiness lie."

The story of the frustration of this hope for happiness is reverently told—of Elizabeth Jane's own misunderstanding and misinterpretation, of the attempted reconciliation and the misconception which sent Henchard away from the wedding feast with his peace-offering uncompleted. "He had not expressed to her any regrets or excuses for what he had done in the past, but it was a part of his nature to extenuate nothing, and live on as one of his own worst accusers." That the understanding and sympathy should come too late, is an irony on which Hardy does not dwell at any length—perhaps for that reason the more poignant.

This is the history of a normal human relation with normal incompleteness and imperfection. It is refreshing, to say the least, in

a wilderness of such monstrosities as Hardy best knows how to put together. Of equal charm is the recital of the devotion of Melbury, the timber merchant of Little Hintock, to the welfare of his only daughter—a devotion which includes elements not present in the story of Henchard and Elizabeth Jane. In the background stands an inconspicuous figure of a woman whose whole life was shaped and subordinated to this dominant affection. "Melbury, in dread lest the only woman who cared for the girl should be induced to leave her, had persuaded the mild Lucy to marry him. The arrangement,—for it was little more—had worked satisfactorily enough; Grace had thriven, and Melbury had not repented."

The curious provincial union of simplicity and shrewdness is shown in Melbury in a number of phases. Not the least interesting is his attitude toward Dr. Fitzpiers:

Melbury's respect for Fitzpiers was based less on his professional position, which was not much, than on the standing of his family in the

county in by-gone days. That implicit faith in members of long-established families, as such, irrespective of their personal condition or character, which is still found among old-fashioned people in the rural districts, reached its full intensity in Melbury. His daughter's suitor was descended from a family he had heard of in his grandfather's time as being once great, a family which had conferred its name upon a neighboring village: how could there be anything amiss in this betrothal?

Melbury is pictured as a man of entirely sane and healthy morality, therefore the discovery of Fitzpiers' infidelity, which, in true Hardy fashion, is shown to be the result of traits in his nature not to be overruled or silenced, is a shock which affects his whole being. "He had a ghastly sense that he alone would be responsible for whatever unhappiness should be brought upon her for whom he almost solely lived, whom to retain under his roof he had faced the numerous inconveniences involved in giving up the best part of his house to Fitzpiers. That Fitzpiers could allow himself to look on any other creature

than Grace for a moment filled Melbury with grief and astonishment. In the pure and simple life he had led it had scarcely occurred to him that after marriage a man might be faithless."

Of the change which this discovery brought about in Melbury's nature Hardy gives a penetrating and discriminating picture. Indeed, the whole characterization of Melbury, a man in whom he recognizes, in one of the rare cases, the existence of thoroughly normal passions and desires, of normal human loves and sympathies, is without flaw or blemish:

The suspicion that his darling child was being slighted wrought almost a miraculous change in Melbury's nature. No man so furtive for the time as the ingenuous countryman who finds that his ingenuousness has been abused. Melbury's heretofore confidential candor towards his gentlemanly son-in-law was displaced by a feline stealth that did injury to his every action, thought, and mood. He knew that a woman once given to a man for life took, as a rule, her lot as it came, and made the best of it, without external interference; but for the first time he asked himself why this so

generally should be so. . . . Wisely, or unwisely, and whatever other fathers did, he resolved to fight his daughter's battle still.

That he was never fully taken into his daughter's confidence as to the unhappiness of her married life is shown as an evidence of the acute sensitiveness developed by affection. "The insight which is bred of deep sympathy was never more finely exemplified than in this instance. Through her guarded manner he discerned the interior of Grace's life only too truly, hidden as were its incidents from every outer eye." This development, in a nature naturally unsuspecting and free from oversubtlety, is the reflection of one of the sunny phases of life which Hardy rarely pictures, and one for which we cannot be too grateful.

The story of Mrs. Yeobright, and her passionate devotion to her son Clym, culminating as it did in the tragic attempt to bring about that reconciliation which was eternally frustrated by the guiltiness of Eustacia, presents a new aspect of the passion of parenthood. To understand this it is necessary to remember

her peculiarities of manner and position. "She was a woman of middle age, with well formed features of the type usually found where perspicacity is the chief quality enthroned within. At moments she seemed to be regarding issues from a Nebo denied to others around. She had something of an estranged mien; the solitude exhaled from the heath was concentrated in this face that had risen from it. The air with which she looked at the heathmen betokened a certain unconcern at their presence, or at what might be their opinions of her for walking in that lonely spot at such an hour, thus indirectly implying that in some respect or other they were not up to her level. The explanation lay in the fact that though her husband had been a small farmer, she herself was a curate's daughter, who had once dreamt of doing better things."

These elements in her nature, which removed Mrs. Yeobright from the sphere of ordinary Egdon farm-folk, made her peculiarly susceptible to the finer emotions and instincts which were a part of the natural inheritance

of her son. "His theory and his wishes about devoting his future to teaching had made an impression on Mrs. Yeobright. Indeed, how could it be otherwise, when he was a part of her—where their discourses were as if carried on between the right and the left hands of the same body? He had despaired of reaching her by argument, and it was almost as a discovery to him that he could reach her by a magnetism which was as superior to words as words are to yells. Strangely enough, he began to feel now that it would not be so hard to persuade her who was his best friend that comparative poverty was essentially the higher course for him, as to reconcile to his feelings the act of persuading her."

There follows a remarkable analysis of Mrs. Yeobright's character and perceptions—one which is unexcelled in vigor and understanding:

> She had a singular insight into his life, considering that she had never mixed with it. There are instances of persons who without clear ideas of the things they criticize, have yet

had clear ideas of the relations of those things. In the social sphere these gifted ones are mostly women; they can watch a world which they never saw, and estimate forces which they have only heard. We call it intuition. . . . What was the great world to Mrs. Yeobright? A multitude whose tendencies could be perceived though not its essences. Communities were seen by her as from a distance; she saw them as we see the throngs which cover the canvases of Van Alsloot, and others of that school, vast masses of being, jostling, zigzagging, and processioning in definite directions, but whose features are indistinguishable by the very comprehensiveness of the view. One could see that, as far as it had gone, her life was very complete on its reflective side. The philosophy of her nature, and its limitation by circumstances, was almost written in her movements. They had a majestic foundation, though they were far from being majestic; and they had a ground work of assurance, but they were not assured. As her once elastic walk had become deadened by time, so had her natural pride of life been hindered in its blooming by her necessities.

The story of the attempt of such a woman to become reconciled to the alienation of her son's affections, and of her pathetic endeavor

to make peace with her son's wife, is one of the most moving tales in Hardy's repertory. It is perfect in every detail. Even the six old-fashioned tea-cups, mute evidences of a peace-offering never completed, have their own characteristic message toward the appreciation of character.

It is part of the irony which invests the order of the world in Hardy's eyes that the impression left in the mind of Clym is of her bitterness and resentfulness at his supposed indifference. The words spoken in grief and anguish to the little boy who last saw her conscious, representing as they did the reaction from a state of mind charged with emotional anxiety, were not true indices of her belief in her son; yet it was inevitable that they should be so interpreted by her son, in his complete ignorance of both her motives and her desire. One is inevitably led to recollect the story of Lear and Cordelia, though the parallel is by no means exact. There is something in the emotional tension which suggests the mad old king, plucking "darnel and

all the idle weeds that grow," and vainly struggling to persuade himself that his jewel still lives. It is in analyses like these that one realizes the vigor of Hardy's artistry and skill.

This view of parental affection is a large one and a generous one withal. It is free from morbidness and from the taint of irregularity which runs through so much of Hardy's presentation of the human relations. Most worthy is the artistic skill which makes such delineation possible. George Eliot's point of view differs in its details and direction. She is less concerned with the actual phenomena of parental love than with the philosophy which defines and explains it. Her view is to this extent deeper, though less distinct. Of her understanding of the possibilities involved, a single passage from *Adam Bede* gives conclusive evidence:

> Family likeness has often a deep sadness in it. Nature, that great tragic dramatist, knits us together by bone and muscle, and divides us by the subtler web of our brains; blends yearning and repulsion, and ties us by our heart-

strings to beings that jar us at every movement. We hear a voice with the very cadence of our own uttering thoughts we despise; we see eyes—ah, so like our mother's!—averted from us in cold alienation, and our last darling child startles us with the air and gestures of the sister we parted from in bitterness long years ago.

A striking illustration of the truth of this commentary is found in the story of Mrs. Transome and her son Harold. It will be remembered that this child, born of an unhappy intrigue, developed in time such abilities and physical traits as effectively proclaimed his paternity. To his mother's eye these were unmistakably plain from the first days of his return from his many years' sojourn in the Levant. Thus, in spite of her devoted love for him, he became a constant reminder to her of her infidelity.

Of Mrs. Transome's feeling toward her son we learn much. For him she had been willing to make sacrifices and run risks which galled her pride in every way. She had forced herself to endure the presence of Matthew

Jermyn, for whom her quondam passion had become the bitterest hatred, as his pettiness had made itself apparent; and she had striven with all her might to preserve some traces of the family dignity for Harold. Yet there was a strain of loneliness and isolation in her life, about which George Eliot notes the following: "It is a fact perhaps kept a little too much in the background, that mothers have a self larger than their maternity, and that when their sons have become taller than themselves, and are gone from them to college or into the world, there are wide spaces of their time which are not filled with praying for their boys, reading old letters, and envying yet blessing those who are attending to their shirt-buttons."

Mrs. Transome's mother love is an illustration of another principle formulated by George Eliot. "The mother's love is at first an absorbing delight, blunting all other sensibilities; it is an expansion of the animal existence; it enlarges the imagined range for self to move in; but in after years it can only con-

tinue to be joy on the same terms as other long-lived love—that is, by much suppression of self and power of living in the experience of another."

The affection of Rufus Lyon for Esther, and of Silas Marner for Eppie are instances of other phases of parental feeling. In both of these cases the story is of the adoption of a child without claims of kinship, and its rearing to maturity. In both stories the resulting affection is one which rivals in intensity the sentiment of actual paternity. Indeed, in a sense it derives greater force from its voluntary character, linking itself as it does with fundamental needs and affections.

The increment of years may be suggested from these examples. To Hardy, age brings with it the consciousness of the inevitable superseding of the old by the new. Sometimes the perception of the changing order is accompanied by the realization that "God fulfils Himself in many ways." More often it brings with it the cynical acquiescence in the changes which assigns only the lowest motives to hu-

man action, which views with a leering tolerance painful attempts at reconstruction or visits invective and vituperation upon innovators. Such a bitterness toward life George Eliot shows only in Mrs. Transome—a bitterness which is explained and accounted for by past misdeeds. From Mrs. Bulstrode, the wife of the dishonest Middlemarch banker, whose sincere affection for an unworthy man makes her strong and loyal in spite of public disgrace, to the sensitive, appealing figure of Rufus Lyon, with his nervous anxiety to expiate a fancied sin, and his charitable hope for all the world, the rule is that of increasing sympathy and tolerance for all the world.

Curiously enough, Hardy gives no pictures of the old age which must succeed a youth such as that which he so frequently describes. We are given no means of observing the decadence and decline of characters like Damon Wildeve and Eustacia Vye. If the explanation for this lies, as it may, in the belief that nature cannot allow the perpetuation of such characters and their reproduction, Hardy's

view of life may be felt to hold at least one element of saving hope about it. Social science, to be sure, expresses a contrary doctrine; but it is a doctrine which the larger philosophic view, which is properly the birth-right of the artist, might reasonably transcend. By a strange chance, it is the old age of Mrs. Transome, in *Felix Holt,* which shows more clearly the maturity of a completely Hardyesque character.

No discussion of such figures as these is complete without the mention of certain homespun lives which are always thrust into the background of the tales, yet whose individualities are marked enough to gain decisive recognition. Such an one is Denner, the faithful lady's maid to Mrs. Transome, whose tact is such as to conceal her intimate knowledge of family secrets, yet whose understanding creates the only outlets for the surcharged emotion of her mistress—a woman whose long service has entitled her to presume upon her station, yet whose breeding never relaxes to allow her to do so. Sir Christopher Cheverel's

old gardener, to whom in her distress of mind Caterina fled for refuge, is a similar portrait —lacking perhaps in the intimate knowledge which would make him completely sympathetic, yet seeking by every means in his power to soothe where he could not comprehend. More shadowy are the corresponding persons in Hardy's novels, as a rule, yet one recollects such a figure as the widow Edlin, of *Jude the Obscure,* crude, coarse and jarring as she is, as none the less a study of a genuine, and sincere, if unpleasant, type. So also is the case of Drusilla Fawley, with her crotchets and eccentricities, and her superstitious insistence that the Fawleys were never made for marriage. Old Dewy, his son Reuben, and the other members of the Mellstock choir, are delightful miniatures, perfect in their proportion and coloring. The Christmas waits of Egdon cannot be forgotten, so life-like are they in their fashion; the only comparison which one can make with them is with the sturdy, glorious group of Athenian mechanicals,

Snug the Joiner, Bottom the Weaver, Starveling the Tailor, and their companions.

It is a happiness that old age presents itself in these colors and under this guise. And that Hardy and George Eliot should be at one in these details explains at least one curious fact, that one of Hardy's earliest novels, published anonymously, should have been attributed to her. The euphemistic instinct which seeks to present the fairest aspect of the latter stages of life is a sound and healthy one, and one which modern literature has too often failed to respect. However warped and destructive may be his view of the waxing generation, Hardy loyally preserves the more gracious phases of the old. To that extent he is "Victorian," as was George Eliot. To that extent also he is truly realist, and interpreter of human character and dignity.

VIII

RADICAL AND REACTIONARY

IN the preceding essays we have examined the salient points of contrast between two representatives, one of a discarded social theory, the other of the tendencies which have become the main streams of social development within the past twenty-five years. Such a contrast would be merely curious and interesting, were it not for the conclusions which it forces upon us. The questions which it raises are not alone those issues of personal and individual life which make the framework of literary speculation, but the larger problems of social aims and social advances. We are faced with two views of life, vitally opposed to one another, not only in their theory but in their observation regarding humankind. One of these has received the acclaim

of the new generation; has been held to be the expression, exaggerated no doubt, yet in the main fair, of the type of individualism which should be allowed to govern the earth. The other has been discarded with other useless and cumbersome relics of a somewhat discreditable intellectual past. Our modern cant disclaims all mention of worth in a reactionary view of life; admits, with a smile and a shrug of self-complacency, that undoubtedly the reactionaries of to-day were the reformers of the day before, but adds that its own advances have left even the laggards beyond reach of the older message.

To those who think soberly and long, the question is not so readily answered. And the suggested lines of thought lead still farther afield, beyond the domain of literature and sociology, and into the abstract region of philosophical discussion. Eventually, the problem is formulated: What is the essence of the radical position, and how does it differ from the reactionary ideal?

In its broad aspects the distinction is essen-

tially a simple one. The reactionary position is always the easiest of the two possible courses, while the radical attitude is instantly beset with difficulties. This, however, does not tell the whole story, for it must further be remembered that as radicalism and reaction are states of mind, not specific opinions, a view upon a given matter is not of necessity germane. The veriest reactionary may none the less be far ahead of his generation, and the radical may appear to be one of its stragglers. For the reactionary, accepting as he does the easiest view of life that presents itself, may also hold the most advanced opinions of the day, by virtue of his very backwardness. We are familiar with persons who hold highly liberalized religious beliefs, by inheritance, as it were, not by reason of the intellectual pioneering which alone entitles a man to the reputation for radical thought. The analogy holds in other departments of opinion equally. It will be observed, therefore, that there is no incompatibility between the spirit of reaction and advanced opinion. On the other hand,

a man of truly radical temper may consistently hold very conservative beliefs. By definition the radical attitude is the difficult one—difficult because it involves not only independent study and conclusion, but the maintenance of this independence against any pressure. It is not radicalism to cry revolt and go your way, but it is radicalism to maintain the revolutionary fire against opposition and in the face of privation. Often the sincerest radical may hold the most conservative views. The radicalism which lacks the courage of its convictions, which balks at the logical actions resulting from its belief, does not properly deserve the title. Much of this, however, is current among us by way of advanced thought, and arrogates to itself the privileges which belong of right to that which appears more conservative.

The working conditions of life offer but a slight field for the practice of this false radicalism, rather fortunately, on the whole, for it seldom happens that a man is given both the means to put his theories into operation

and the theories for unlimited exploitation. He is obliged to take thought for the morrow, to consider what he shall eat and wherewith he shall be clothed, and it amounts almost to an instinct with him so to correlate his opinions and his circumstances that there shall be no fundamental clash. This is a simple matter of expediency—it has nothing to do with his ideals of morality or justice, or his views of personal liberty. The reactionary allows this discrepancy to continue between his belief and his behavior without making an effort to change either, for this is the easiest solution of the whole matter. He will agree with you that the conditions of child-labor are shocking; but he will argue that such labor is necessary and cannot be abolished. He will cry "Peace, peace," and unhesitatingly devote himself to the profits that accrue from war. The radical, on the other hand, will at least be consistent so far as is humanly possible. He may become a fanatic, or impractical, but his intellectual position will be a clear-cut and decided one, whatever it may be. He will never con-

tent himself with the world as it is, though the universe of his conception be but the most insane dreaming of a frenzied imagination. Such men make martyrs; but they also make leaders and pioneers. They are willing to stake everything they value upon the soundness of their conclusions—and though many, —even, perhaps, most,—fail, of those who succeed are the men who make history.

Some such antithesis as this is perhaps a partial explanation of the Christian paradox, "I come to bring not peace, but a sword." For peace, as it has been crystallized in the comprehension of Christian dogmatists, is really a form of reaction—a stagnation of intellectual and spiritual faculties, an acceptance of a status quo as both possible and ultimately desirable. The remoteness of the realization of this dream does not affect the reactionary character of the intellectual position which makes it possible. Philosophically, it is true, it is possible to conceive an active and expanding peace which shall develop and insist upon the exercise of the radical and ardu-

ous beliefs and convictions; but the figure of the sword is as yet the only one which carries with it the full virility and dynamic emphasis essential to right understanding.

Certain limitations have always been imposed upon the radical by the actual conditions of the world in which he lived. Sometimes these are the limitations of temporary circumstances, removable by hard work and concerted action, though after a season of bitter travail and anguish. During such periods there are always the few, radicals in very truth, who must in some sense make atonement for the blindness of the multitude. And not infrequently the obstacles are of a more fundamental nature, remediable only in the latter stages of the world's progress. Those who see and guess these remoter issues are the mystics and poets, those who dream dreams and see visions, and who pay the heaviest penalties for their insight. They can never hope for the glimpse into their Promised Land, or see the end of the wilderness, and they must always bear the tormenting

fear lest they be but followers of wandering fires.

An author who seeks to expound a philosophy of life may choose in some measure the kind of world in which to give it expression. His philosophy can only be called radical in so far as it forces upon individuals the laborious courses of life, or reactionary in that it accepts the easiest view of human actions and human character. It is not necessary for literature to do either of these things. It may aim merely at the realistic portrayal of life without comment or judgment. But when it does this it loses its distinctive quality. For literature is the only medium for the record of reflection. Painting and sculpture are primarily concerned with the bodily form of things, music with their atmosphere, if one may use such a phrase,—in literature only is there scope for the exercise of the rational powers alike of artist and audience. In the drama alone is this distinctive quality suspended; for in proportion as drama gains in representative force, it loses its literary qual-

ity. We recognize a sharp distinction between "closet" and "acting" drama; and in our classical dramatic literature the practical test of excision, where circumstances require, shows all too clearly the essential alignment between the drama and the representative arts. For the "literary" passages, those of fine reflection, or discriminating commentary, or sheer poetic fantasy, are those which must give way to the necessities of stage-manager and producing-agent.

In this large sense the radical point of view of the two we have been contrasting is not that of Thomas Hardy, "advanced" though his theories may be, but that of George Eliot. For Hardy's view of life, in spite of the prevailingly tragic outcome which results in specific cases, is an easy and simple one. Such and such are the human passions, irresistible and immutable; though a man may see in this indulgence the destruction of his hopes and ideals, he has no choice but to obey. As a matter of fact, he rarely looks far enough to be aware of the more distant consequences; nor

does he care to do so. This fatalistic view is always the reactionary one, even though it may lead to brilliant achievements. Hardy's "radicalism" has no more justification than that which comes from a brutally outspoken and unreserved handling of themes of crude passion and cruder mentality. He is content to accept conditions as they are, protesting a little regretfully that they are so, but without so much as a theory of possible change. It is the philosophy of the *Lotos-Eaters:*

> Let us alone—what is it that will last?
> All things are taken from us, and become
> Portions and parcels of the dreadful past.
> Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
> To war with evil? Is there any peace
> In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
> All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
> In silence—ripen, fall and cease;
> Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

The moral stamina which comes from a definite, if difficult and unattainable, goal to-

ward which endeavor may be directed, is utterly absent from this view of life. This following of the instinctive emotional currents makes no appeal to the fundamentals of character.

For radicalism, to be real and permanent, must rest in the character behind the action. This is true of George Eliot. She supports the traditions because, although in certain respects (against which she protests unhesitatingly) they are inadequate, yet they represent a sound standard of life and of morality. Her agreement is of the radical sort which leads to progression, not the reactionary acceptance of the gospel of things as they are. This intellectual position explains the apparent contradiction between her own theory and practice. Many people go no further than this, and condemn her for insincerity on no other or better grounds. They cannot realize that her revolt from convention was inspired by thorough respect for convention rather than contempt. In this the radical is distinguished from the reactionary, who, because he

is swept along on the surface currents of his time and his social group, conforms to its regulations as a part of his passive subjection to life rather than support them in vital agreement.

It is true that radicalism is not always of this nature. Sometimes it is to be found in a sincere intellectual revolt against any and all the restraints of socialized existence—a revolt which lacks nothing of the dynamism of that which we have been considering, but which is irreconcilably at variance with organized society. Such revolutionary activity accomplishes nothing except as it changes the spiritual temper of its contemporaries in the direction of a sincere repudiation of that which it has ceased to believe. Even with this uncertain achievement, it is not to be feared or to be despised, so long as its sincerity is past question.

Judged by these standards the essential radicalism of George Eliot's position, even now, after a generation of upheaval and unrest, is apparent. We have seen how her view

of emerging womanhood compares favorably with the movements of the present day. To have anticipated the line of development in this particular is perhaps the most remarkable test of radicalism. We have always contrasted Western respect for womanhood with Eastern disregard, as we have contrasted Anglo-Saxon deference with Latin indifference. But in spite of this mark of supremacy as we describe it, we have tolerated conditions which have brought upon us the beginning of a great struggle whereof the end is not yet. It is inevitable that, in the development consequent upon such a struggle, many things formerly considered essential will lose their value in our eyes. One possibility of change along unexpected lines is suggested by Bertrand Russell in the chapter of *Why Men Fight* which deals with the population question:

> The diminution of numbers, in all likelihood, will rectify itself in time through the elimination of those characteristics which at present lead to a small birthrate. Men and women who can still believe the Catholic faith will have a

biological advantage; gradually a race will grow up which will be impervious to the assaults of reason, and will believe imperturbably that limitation of families leads to hell-fire. Women who have mental interests, who care about art or literature or politics, who desire a career or who value their liberty, will gradually grow rarer, and be more and more replaced by a placid maternal type which has no interests outside the home and no dislike of the burden of motherhood. This result, which ages of masculine domination have vainly striven to achieve, is likely to be the final outcome of women's emancipation and of their attempt to enter upon a wider sphere than that to which the jealousy of men confined them in the past.

To steer a careful way between this danger, undoubtedly a real one, and those clearly-visualized evils which many years have shown, is an herculean task. The view of womanhood in its larger relations is one in which George Eliot has faced and analyzed both possibilities, and reached a practical mean. It is not unlikely that the conditions prevailing at the close of the war will make hers a more radical

view than now; for with the emphasis upon repopulating the world which has already begun will come a consequent relaxation of moral standards, whose danger to men, great as that is, will be infinitely less than the danger to women caused by the growth of an attitude of moral and physical compliance by which alone can sterility be avoided. Only by some such intellectual realization as hers of the value of tradition and the possible reconciliation between tradition and the newer freedom can the double menace be escaped. We shall ultimately learn that the unregulated liberty which is the basis of Hardy's view of life is profound evidence of the easy-going laissez-faire spirit of reaction.

One may ask, then,—What is the principle of authority which the radical recognizes? Clearly, it will not do to insist on tradition alone, however much we may rightly value the experience which tradition summarizes. Neither will it serve to say, as some have done, that a revival of the religious spirit will meet the need. A new religious awakening will

never have the absolute authority which i might have had before the upbuilding of th modern critical spirit. It will undoubtedly gain, for it will have the loyal support of in tellect and imagination alike; but its appea will not be that of authority. The authorita tive control must come from yet anothe source—the constant longing and active labor ing for complete sincerity, intellectual and moral. A man whose intellectual integrity i unquestioned may be trusted with the upbuild ing of a sound radicalism.

The elements which go to develop this sin cerity of character and outlook are essentially those which produce a sound literary realism the truth to nature which critics and artists have struggled after for centuries. George Eliot represents this realistic tradition. It is easy to pass from this attitude toward life, essentially a rational and sincere one, to that which goes by the name of naturalism, by a simple exaggeration of details and a falsification of facts. This is typical of the school which Hardy represents. There is the same

parallel between realism and naturalism that there is between authority and autocracy, between self-defence and aggression, between discipline and subjection. The danger is that the lawful boundaries of each of these excellences may be overstepped, with the usual consequence of extreme action. It is by association with such extremes that people have been led to discredit what passes for radicalism, never perceiving the differentiation between the two. The modern emphasis is distinctly one of extremes, in this as in larger matters.

The same eccentric tendency is to be noted in the alternations of public feeling between moods of quasi-religious ecstasy and unexampled vindictiveness. Since the outbreak of the European War we have hailed the development of a new religious impulse—one which many observers feel to be a great gift of the conflict. Parallel with it is the strenuous endeavor to stimulate and perpetuate national and individual hatreds as a divine necessity. No intermediate position receives just consid-

eration. The radical attitude is that of a small group of pacifists in all countries whose position is summarized by Bertrand Russell: "The active pacifists, however, are not of this class: they are not men without impulsive force, but men in whom some impulse to which war is hostile is strong enough to overcome the impulses that lead to war. It is not the act of a passionless man to throw himself athwart the whole movement of the national life, to urge an outwardly hopeless cause, to incur obloquy and to resist the contagion of collective opinion. The impulse to avoid the hostility of public opinion is one of the strongest in human nature, and can only be overcome by an unusual force of direct and uncalculating impulse; it is not cold reason alone that can prompt such an act."

To us of the present, George Eliot is one of these advocates of what appears a lost cause. After a brief season of high esteem, she has lost prestige as a thinker, while retaining the doubtful glory of artistic achievement in an unfashionable style. She is not one of

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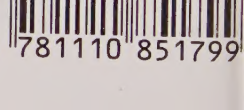

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